

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 23 (CENTRAL OKANAGAN)
SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT ON ACHIEVEMENT
December 10, 2008

Section 22 of the *School Act* was amended last spring to include the following:

“A board must appoint a superintendent of schools for a school district who, under the general direction of the board...,

(b.1) must, on or before December 15 of a school year, prepare and submit to the board a report on student achievement in that district for the previous year.”

Section 79.3 goes on to say:

“On receipt of a report submitted by a superintendent of schools under section 23(1) (b.1), the board must, on approval of the report,

(a) immediately, and in any event no later than January 31 of the school year in which the board receives the report, submit that report to the minister, and

(b) as soon as practicable, make the report available to the public.”

The annual mid-year report on student achievement is intended to serve two main purposes:

- Ensure transparency and accountability for each school district in terms of its responsibility for improving student achievement by providing a public vehicle for the Superintendent of Schools to annually comment on student achievement in their district; and
- Provide a mid-year look at student achievement by reflecting on progress to date as well as considering new information that will facilitate subsequent planning for continuing improvement of student achievement at the school and school district levels as school plans and district achievement contracts are developed.

This report follows the District Achievement Contract approved by the School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan) Board of Education in June 2008. Although a full complement of data is not available to track progress since that time, there are some notable indicators have been included in this mid-year report.

In addition, School District No. 23 underwent a full external review by a Ministry of Education team in mid-November, 2007. The team confirmed our earlier internal findings and reported that District progress on its goals, its overall levels of student achievement, and its commitment to continued improvement, were all very positive. The full external team written report was made public on January 30th, 2008 and is available on the District's website (www.sd23.bc.ca).

Current District Goals

For the 2008/2009 school year, the School District No. 23 Board of Education established its goals towards improvement in student achievement with emphasis on:

- Graduation Rate
- Numeracy
- Literacy

In addition, the Board established a number of supplemental areas of focus:

- Programs and Schools of Choice
- Staff recruitment, development and retention
- Quality Assessment
- Health - Daily Physical Activity Plan and Transfats elimination

Key questions to be answered in reviewing student achievement include:

- What is improving or not improving?
- What evidence confirms this trend?
- What will the District now do as the result of this information?

Graduation Rate

Context – The District has worked hard to improve our student graduation rate for a number of years, yet our overall six-year graduation rate was stalled at 76%; a rate below the Provincial average of 78%. In addition, our Aboriginal student graduation rate, while above the Provincial average, was significantly below our overall average. Both of these situations changed significantly in 2006/2007 when our District six-year grad rate rose above 82% and our Aboriginal student grad rate rose above 59%.

It is projected that both of these numbers will have risen in 2007/2008, although the data has not yet been made available by the Ministry of Education. We are also projecting further improvements in both measures during 2008/2009.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT	AVAILABLE EVIDENCE SOURCES
The overall School District No. 23 graduation rate increased from 76% to 82.4% for the 2006/2007 school year.	Ministry of Education Six-Year Graduation Data 2006/2007
The overall School District No. 23 Aboriginal student graduation rate increased from 48% to 59.5% for the 2006/2007 school year.	Ministry of Education Six-Year Graduation Data 2006/2007

Numeracy

Context – The District remains committed to increasing both student achievement levels on specific measures and the number of students choosing mathematics courses in senior grades. Significant progress on achievement has been made, although our major focus in 2008/2009 has been around establishing new District numeracy measurements and tracking mechanisms. It anticipated that we will have established a full complement of new measures and mechanisms by the end of this school year, and that we will be in a much improved position to make appropriate adjustments to our math programs and instructional practices at all levels.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT	AVAILABLE EVIDENCE SOURCES
Grade 10 math final mark percent score is above the provincial average, but the exam only score is slightly below the provincial average.	Ministry of Education 2007/2008 Grade 10 Math results
The percentage of students failing Math 10 is significantly below the provincial average especially for public schools.	Ministry of Education 2007/2008 Grade 10 Math results
The average course mark and the average exam mark for students completing Principles of Math 12 is slightly above the provincial average.	Ministry of Education 2007/2008 Grade 12 Math results
Grade 4 FSA results have shown multiple years of improvement and are at their highest level ever.	Ministry of Education 2006/2007 FSA results
Grade 7 FSA results have improved for a fourth year reversing a previous three-year modest decline.	Ministry of Education 2006/2007 FSA results

Note: There is very limited new Math data available to report at this time. Our 2009/2010 Achievement Contract will focus on reporting a variety of local and site data sources.

Literacy

Context – Student achievement in the area of literacy continues to be a strength for School District No. 23. Recent FSA measures of literacy at the grade 4 and 7 levels as well as provincial exam results show the District continues to improve in this area. Our most significant weakness, however, is still a lag in achievement at the intermediate grades. The issue of why we have not yet seen the success of our students in the primary and secondary grades replicated in the intermediate grades has yet to be fully understood. This general concern is certainly duplicated in our literacy specific data.

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT	AVAILABLE EVIDENCE SOURCES
The District Primary Screener has shown a significant improvement in student literacy preparedness from Kindergarten to grade 3.	District Primary Screener consolidated results for all elementary schools
Both levels of participation and achievement levels in Advanced Placement English courses at all five secondary schools continue to rise. Enrolment has more than doubled in two years.	District Advanced Placement course results by school for 2007/2008
School Wide Write achievement data is rising at the middle school level, with a greater percentage of students achieving a 3 or 4 (meeting or exceeding) standing.	District School Wide Write data at the middle school level (grades 7 to 9)
Grade 7 FSA reading results have rebounded for the 2006/2007 school year.	Ministry of Education 2006/2007 FSA results
Grade 4 FSA results remain significantly above the range for similar school districts.	Ministry of Education 2006/2007 FSA results

Areas of Focus Update

PROGRESS WITHIN FOCUS AREAS	EVIDENCE
<p>Programs and Schools of Choice to meet the needs of individual students.</p>	<p>The District as well as several individual schools has been very successful at establishing programs of choice at the secondary and middle levels to best meet the needs of each learner. We are also now beginning to establish programs of choice for our elementary students. Parents may also choose a school of choice as space permits. Source - District BAA, dual credit and SSA course lists as well as program listings for the earlier grades. The initiative is also overviewed in our District Strategic Plan for 2008/2009 and beyond.</p>
<p>Obtain, develop and retain the highest quality staff</p>	<p>200+ new staff hired since September 2007, Learning Center programs established for all staff, and the retention of teachers and support staff is being addressed. Source - District long-range Strategic Plan and Human Resources department data.</p>
<p>Quality Assessment</p>	<p>A comprehensive professional development, alignment and implementation plan established for teachers and administrators focusing on quality assessment and differentiated instruction. Source - District Strategic Plan</p>
<p>District Health Promoting Schools Plan</p>	<p>Daily physical activity plans established in all schools. Full tracking and reporting process being adjusted to meet school needs on an on-going basis. Plan to eliminate manmade trans fats being implemented at the school level. Source - District Health Promoting Schools Plan</p>

Areas of Ongoing Strength

The following are ongoing areas of strength for School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan) in regards to student achievement.

Overall Improvement Trend for Student Achievement

- The overall District trend for student achievement is almost entirely positive. This includes, but is not limited to, overall student graduation rate, Aboriginal student graduation rate, special education school leaving certificate completion rate, grade-to-grade readiness rates, grade-to-grade transition rates, alternate programs completion rate, and primary program 'at risk' student rates.

Aboriginal Student Six-Year Graduation Rate

- The six-year graduation rate for Aboriginal students in the District has increased steadily over a period of five years from 46% in 2002/2003 to just under 60% in 2006/2007.
- The Aboriginal student graduation rate has improved in each of the past five years; not just over the five-year time period.
- Although most recent Ministry of Education six-year student graduation data has yet to be released, it is projected that the rate will show an increase for 2007/2008 and again for 2008/2009.
- The improvement shown supports goals and targets identified with our Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. This is reflected in the most recent C.D. Howe provincial study of District Aboriginal Programs, which shows School District No. 23 as having one of the top ten programs in B.C., and that the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal achievement data is far below the provincial average.

High Levels of Student Achievement at the Primary Level

- A comprehensive student vulnerability and skills screening program has been established with coverage of all students in kindergarten to grade 3.
- The District Kindergarten and Primary Screener indicates substantial improvement in the number of at-risk students by grade (K to 3), but also within individual cohort groups over a four-year time period. 2007/2008 grade results from our Primary Screener show the percentage of at-risk students declining from 23% at the K level to 16% at the grade 3 level.
- CAT-3 results indicate that School District No. 23 and the vast majority of all our elementary schools have student achievement levels above national norms and the remainder at the national norms.

Provision of Programs of Choice Supporting Achievement for Each Student

- There are new programs of choice for students at all grade levels. These include career programs, academies, traditional school, BAA course offerings, apprenticeships, enrichment programs, gifted programs, fine arts, language immersion, Advanced Placement and distance learning.

Career Preparation Participation and Completion Data

- The District has maintained a steadily increasing percentage of students enrolled in designated career preparation programs. The rise has been 35 percentage points (now at 82%) over a ten-year period as shown within the Ministry District Operational Trends data.

Norm-Based Achievement Data above National Averages

- School District No. 23 students consistently achieve above national average on all components of the Canadian Achievement Test (CAT-3). This trend has been maintained through more than ten years of testing.

Improving Areas of Student Achievement

The following are areas of substantial recent improvement for School District No. 23 (Central Okanagan) in regard to student achievement. There remains, however, significant work to be done to further improve each of the achievement indicators.

Overall Six-Year Graduation Rate

- At the end of the 2006/2007 school year, the District six-year graduation rate was 82.4%. This is a substantial increase over our previous stalled rate of 76%, and is now above the provincial average.
- Although most recent Ministry of Education data has yet to be released, it is projected that the rate will show an increase for 2007/2008 and again for 2008/2009.

Student Readiness as Reflected in Grade-to-Grade Transition Data

- The percentage of students transitioning from one grade to the next is generally steady, but improving especially at the secondary level. Recent sample data showing improvement includes: grade 9 - 95%, grade 10 - 93%, and grade 11-90%. Further improvement of our tracking system does, however, need to occur.

A Higher Percentage of Special Education Students Achieving School Completion

- With the establishment of a District protocol for the assignment of letter grades for IEP/school leaving certificate students, we have seen both the number and percentage of special education students achieving a school leaving certificate improve. A more complete assessment of this trend will be established this year.

Improved Course Completion Data for Students in Alternate Education Programs

- An example of this general trend is the retention of grade 10 students (the grade where we lose the largest number of alternate education students) has risen significantly over two years, and the course completion rate for those students has also nearly doubled.

Improved Student Retention Data for Individual Schools and the District as a Whole

- Similar to our overall graduation rate, we have seen a steady increase in the rate of student retention within individual schools and the District. In short, we are losing fewer students from the system before the end of grade 12, even if not every one of these students graduates. This data is reflected in improving grade to grade transition rates that sit in the 90 percent plus range for all grades except grade 12.

Challenging areas

The following are areas of student achievement that have been identified as of interest or concern, but where no substantial improvement has been made in recent years.

Student Achievement Dip at the Intermediate Level

- We continue to experience a significant dip in overall student achievement indicators through grades 6 to 9. This dip in student performance is noted in the following performance indicators: School Wide Writes, Stanford Diagnostic data summaries, FSA results for grade 7s, school based student mark summaries and the 2007 District External Team Review Report.

Failure of some Individual Schools to Substantially Improve Student Achievement

- The overall District trend for student achievement is positive, yet a few individual schools have failed to show any improvement in results. This is of concern especially for those schools that have shown results consistently below the District average or when compared to District achievement targets. The data source for this information, and the primary point of conversation, has been the School Planning Council report review meetings.

Achievement Lag for Male Students

- Male students under perform when compared to female students on almost every indicator of student achievement and at all grade levels. Sample comparative data sources include: Primary Screener, FSA, School Wide Writes, grade 10 and 12 Provincial exams, and graduation rates.
- Although there has been a positive trend in achievement indicators for male students, we have yet to meet any of our District performance indicator targets when we consider this subgroup on a standalone basis.

Poor Results for Students New to the School District

- The District has made substantial progress toward addressing the needs of individual at-risk students at all grade levels. Exceptions to this high level of success are usually with students who enter the School District after Kindergarten.
- The later a student joins our School District, the less likely it is they will match the achievement levels of our District as a whole.
- This lower level of success is reflected in general graduation rates, Aboriginal student graduation rates, report card marks, and Primary Screener results.

Other Observations and Considerations for the School District

- We are currently in the final stages of setting up a comprehensive data warehouse as part of a Ministry of Education co-sponsored development project. Implementation of the warehouse in September, 2009 should improve both our ability to track data and the timeliness of reporting significantly.
- A District committee is currently reviewing the various assessment tools we use K-12 to track student progress and to provide supplemental information for informing instruction. The committee will make recommendations this year on a coordinated list of assessments to cover needs of all students at every level.
- The ability of schools to focus on improving student achievement has been hampered at times by distractions. These administrative or non-educational duties at times draw heavily on both teacher and administrator time, limiting the efforts needed to move us ahead in regard to student learning and achievement.
- The timeliness of student achievement data reporting is limiting our ability to make immediate changes to our programs and processes. The resulting time lag slows our improvement of overall achievement levels. While some improvements are possible at the District level, much of the compilation and reporting process is out of our control.

Conclusion

At the mid-year point of 2008/2009, the Central Okanagan School District continues to attain levels of student achievement at or above provincial averages. Likewise, the general trend for student achievement at all grade levels is toward improvement. While substantial work needs to be done, all partner groups should be proud of what has been accomplished to date. Perhaps our biggest challenge will be to refine our efforts to meet the needs of each individual learner and in particular for those students who have traditionally not found success within our school system.

It is anticipated the 2009/2010 District Achievement Contract will confirm positive improvement in our success indicators for all students as well as improved tracking of specific data and interventions.

Submitted to the School District No.23 (Central Okanagan) Board of Education on December 10, 2008.



Mike Roberts
Superintendent of Schools