

Superintendent's Report on Achievement 2008/2009

Presented at a Public Meeting of the North Vancouver Board of Education

December 8, 2009

Section 22 of the *School Act* was amended in the spring of 2007 and now includes the following:

“A board must appoint a superintendent of schools for the 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 school year.”

Section 79.3 continues:

“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 the report to the minister, and (b) As soon as practicable, make the report available to the public.”

The annual 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;
- 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.

In response to the Representative for Children and Youth and the Provincial Health Officer's report entitled *Kids, Crime and Care (Health and Well-Being of Children in Care: Youth Justice Experiences and Outcomes)*, the Achievement Report also includes information relating to Recommendation 5 of the report, which states that:

“...every school in British Columbia assign a single staff person to oversee education planning, monitoring and attainment of children in care that attend their school. This function should be in place and functioning by September 2009.”

Building upon our ongoing strengths

The North Vancouver School District continues to plan effectively for the ongoing improvement of student achievement and as acknowledged by the District Review completed in 2007. The District Review Team focused its comments on four key areas for the school district to support student achievement: Setting Directions, Organizing for Improvement, Building Learning Communities and Achieving Results. Examples of ongoing strengths in each of these areas are outlined below.

Setting Directions

- Developing more authentic assessment practices to support consistent planning for improving student achievement as an integral component of instruction
- Positive learning environment in North Vancouver schools and connections to Safe and Caring schools initiatives and TRIBES initiative within the *Instructional Institute*
- Communication, reinforcement and further development of the School District's strategic Vision and supporting statements to support student achievement.

Organizing for Improvement

- Continued strength in instructional and curricular initiatives including the *Instructional Institute*, Collegial Conferencing, Action Research projects, and the development of curricular materials supporting instruction in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Information and Communication Technology
- Continued focus on providing interventions for early learners, including the institutionalization of the TOPA K-Math assessments at Kindergarten
- Continued implementation of the *Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement*, the strength of the partnerships with the First Nations, the effectiveness of the District Aboriginal Education Advisory Council, bridging support with the *Capilano Littlest Ones* and the establishment of summer school programs through Esliha7an to achieve school completion.

Building Learning Communities

- Active participation of partner groups on many School District committees
- Rich relationships continue to be fostered among partner groups and individuals throughout the district and in partnerships with the Squamish and Tsleil Watuth Nations
- The cohesive and thorough professional development opportunities provided through the *Instructional Institute*, Collegial Conferencing and Action Research projects which provide educators with a wealth of tools to meet the needs of all students.

Achieving Results

- Strong student achievement in the School District with an increased focus on strengthening relationships and student engagement to support increased student success
- The attention being paid to Aboriginal achievement, including improving transition and completion rates for Aboriginal learners
- The successes of many of our schools with large numbers of vulnerable students.

Specific examples of student achievement that are established strengths

Student achievement within the North Vancouver School District continues to be very strong with the school district averages exceeding the Provincial average in six-year completion rates and in all mandatory examinable subjects; English 10, Mathematics 10 and Science 10.

Six year completion rates have improved from 81% to 84% in the past year, continuing to surpass the Provincial Average for all students (including private and independent schools), as provided in Table 1. These rates include all international students attending our schools, the vast majority who are enrolled for a limited period of time that prevents them from being able to achieve completion in the six-year completion time frame. The Six-year Completion Rate for Aboriginal students reached its highest level in the past decade significantly improving from 34% in 2007/08 to 51% in the past year.

Table 1

Six-Year Completion Rate						
	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
All Students (North Vancouver)	81	82	84	82	81	84
All Students (Province)	79	79	79	80	79	79
Girls (North Vancouver)	83	85	88	84	84	86
Girls (Province)	83	83	83	84	82	82
Boys (North Vancouver)	78	81	81	79	78	82
Boys (Province)	75	76	76	77	76	77
Aboriginal (North Vancouver)	28	47	38	32	34	51
Aboriginal (Province)	46	48	47	48	47	49

Another notable gain in the Six-year Completion Rate is the relationship between Girls and Boys, with the ‘gender gap’ difference being reduced to 3.2%. This is significantly better than the provincial average of 5.6%. This improvement may be attributed to an increased focus on the engagement and achievement of students based on their individual needs and abilities, thus more attention being brought to boys’ engagement and achievement in recent years at both the school and district levels.

Distribution of letter grades by course reported by the Ministry of Education provides an indicator of student achievement for each of the required examinable subjects at Grade 10; English, Mathematics and Science. The Final Mark for students is a blended mark that accounts both for the classroom assessment (school mark) and the provincial examination (exam mark).

Table 2

Subject: English 10 (2008/2009)			
	C+ (good) or better	C (fair) or better	C- (pass) or better
North Vancouver	68	83	97
Province	66	81	96

Student achievement results in North Vancouver for **English 10** (Table 2) are better than those reported for public schools and the province (includes both private and independent school results) at all three levels indicated [C+ (good) or better, C (fair) or better, and C- (pass) or better].

Table 3

Subject: Principles of Mathematics 10 (2008/2009)			
	C+ (good) or better	C (fair) or better	C- (pass) or better
North Vancouver	57	72	94
Province	59	75	93

Student achievement results in North Vancouver for **Principles of Mathematics 10** (Table 3) are better than those reported for public schools and the province (includes both private and independent school results) at the C- (pass) or better level and slightly lower than those for the C+ (good) or better and C (fair) or better levels.

Table 4

Subject: Science 10 (2008/2009)			
	C+ (good) or better	C (fair) or better	C- (pass) or better
North Vancouver	65	81	96
Province	62	78	95

Student achievement results in North Vancouver for **Science 10** (Table 4) are considerably better than those reported for public schools and the province (includes both private and independent school results) at all three levels indicated [C+ (good) or better, C (fair) or better, and C- (pass) or better].

Number of Graduates and Graduates Achieving Honours Standing

The total number of North Vancouver School District students graduating with a Dogwood, School Completion Certificate and Adult Graduation Diploma reported by the Ministry of Education for 2008/2009 is 1,713. Of this total, 1,696 students received their ‘Dogwoods’, while 17 students received School Completion Certificates.

A total of 1271 students achieved their graduation through our secondary schools with another 425 achieving graduation through Continuing Education, Distributed Learning and Alternate Programs. Continuing Education recorded the greatest number of graduates from all schools and programs in the School District for the 2008/2009 school year with a total of **338** students achieving graduation.

This high number of students achieving graduation through Continuing Education is reflective of the continuous commitment of the School District to learners beyond the six-year time frame established by the Ministry of Education as a ‘system performance indicator’. The North Vancouver School District is proud to celebrate the accomplishment of our students achieving their graduation in their seventh, eighth, and many more years later!

In order for a student to achieve Honours Standing, the student must have a Grade Point Average (GPA) higher than 3.0 (a better than B average). Nearly 54% of our secondary students and 21% of our Continuing Education and Alternate Program students graduated with Honours Standing in 2008/2009. Seycove Secondary School students achieved the highest percentage of graduates achieving Honours Standing at nearly **63%**.

Improving areas of student achievement

An analysis of the “trend line” for the six-year completion rate indicates improvement in the six-year completion rates (as reported in Table 1) for all students and for the female and male sub-groups.

Continued improvements have been experienced in readiness of Kindergarten students, including Aboriginal students, in both reading and numeracy. Continued improvement has also been experienced in supporting students identified at risk through early intervention measures in literacy and numeracy. Our early intervention has been enhanced through the application of instructional strategies within our locally developed resource for oral language development, *Our Turn to Talk*.

Evidence of improved reading readiness for Kindergarten students is through the TOPA (Test of Phonological Awareness) following the implementation of intervention strategies. Evidence of improvement in numeracy is through the implementation of the District’s K/1 Numeracy Assessment. Evidence of continued improvement for students with special needs has been observed through their accomplishments in relation to their Individual Education Plans (IEP) and through the successful accomplishment of School Completion Certificates.

While student achievement continues to be strong throughout Grades 1 through 7, the School District has not yet capitalized on the reporting capacity of *ReportCentral* to provide district-wide evidence of the achievement of students in relation to the provincial Performance Standards. We anticipate being able to commence the aggregation of report card data during the 2009-2010 school year to report elementary student achievement in a more comprehensive and meaningful manner than currently available through the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) results.

FSA scores at the District and school levels have become unreliable indicators of student progress as a result of many parents in North Vancouver School District keeping students home on the days when tests are written, and the shift to local marking of the FSA tests making local comparisons with provincial scores and scores in other districts less secure.

Challenging Areas

Trends in student achievement of concern

While strong gains have been experienced in the Six-Year Completion Rates for our Aboriginal Students in the past year, the success rate for self-identified Aboriginal students remains as an area of concern. Six-year completion rates for Aboriginal students (reported in Table 1) are above the provincial average for 2008/2009, but remain significantly lower than those for all students. These results remain subject to significant yearly ‘shifts’ as a result of the low number of aboriginal students reported.

English 10 results for Aboriginal Students (Table 5) are well below the district average.

Table 5

English 10 All Students compared to Aboriginal Students						
	2006/07		2007/08		2008/09	
English 10 Exam & Course Mark	Exam	Course	Exam	Course	Exam	Course
All Students	73	74	74	73	74	73
English 10 Exam & Course Mark	Exam	Course	Exam	Course	Exam	Course
Aboriginal Students	60	65	60	63	59	62

While the six-year completion rate for all students is consistently above the Provincial average and has been improving on a gradual basis, the level and pace of this improvement has been disappointing. Our dedicated educators remain firm in their resolve that our six-year completion rates will be considerably stronger in coming years. Each of our secondary schools has developed a plan to address issues of student engagement.

Actions/interventions to address identified areas of concern

We continue to work closely with the First Nations through our Aboriginal Advisory Committee and through the dedication of specific resources to support Aboriginal learners. We are actively 'linking' district services with the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee to assist with the successful integration of resources. Examples of this linkage include our 'buddy reading' literacy programs, the provision of early learning in-service by North Vancouver School District teachers with the *Capilano Littlest Ones program* staff, and the after school homework clubs at Queen Mary and Westview.

In collaboration with the Squamish Nation, a very successful summer school experience was also provided through the Esliha7an program that resulted in twelve First Nations learners achieving graduation in their 7th year of secondary school during the 2008/2009 school year.

We have been very successful building our relationships with our First Nations community and have achieved greater acknowledgement and integration of First Nations people, customs, traditions and culture. In preparing for the development of our second *Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement*, our discussion and planning at the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee is now moving more directly into specific areas of teaching and learning that will increase our focus on meeting the academic needs of all of our First Nations learners.

We continue to build our capacity to systematically track students more effectively through the use of *ReportCentral* to enhance our ability to deepen our understanding of learners and school populations. This will assist us in monitoring instructional strategies that have made a difference for student achievement and the successful transition of students from elementary to secondary and from school to school. Greater use of Performance Standards will become evident as the District moves toward the development in 2009-2010 of *RubricCentral*, an online application that will allow teachers to access, customize, and bank Performance Standards rubrics in all subject areas and at all grade levels.

We continue to build upon our analysis of the 'non-graduates' data in 2008 to address the foundational importance of social-emotional learning in our schools and to engage secondary students and their parents more directly in discussions related to the graduation requirements. Additionally, we have developed an increased capacity to monitor progress and intervene more quickly when there are indications that a student is at risk of not fulfilling graduation requirements.

The needs of each learner have been emphasized in two recent program reports conducted in the school district. The review of the Keith Lynn Alternate Secondary School has made recommendations to support the needs of students who struggle with school completion. The review titled *Supporting our Special Elementary Learners* (SOSEL) has made recommendations regarding the supports offered through School-Based Resource Teams to support students who are struggling academically, socially, or behaviourally. The implementation of recommendations from these two reviews has implications for the supports provided to all students.

Linking our planning to our Achievement Contract and improved student achievement

The actions identified within this report will be complementary to the strategies identified within the District Achievement Contract: to continue to improve student achievement, most notably for those students who are not yet meeting expectations for reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking as measured by the performance standards; to improve completion rates for students; and to provide academic support for our aboriginal students, particularly in the area of literacy.

The School District has continued to build upon the feedback and recommendations provided through the 2007 District Review to increase our capacity for the analysis of student achievement data, focusing on the use of authentic assessment evidence in ways that are useful, first and foremost, to teachers in their work with students.

Our continued focus on *Assessment of, as, and for learning* through the *Instructional Institute*, Collegial Conferencing, Action Research, Understanding by Design and differentiated instruction continue to help contribute to the increased knowledge and application of effective instructional interventions to help all students achieve improved success.

Implementation of the recommendation of the Representative of Children and Youth regarding Children in Care

In response to the recommendation of the Representative of Children and Youth regarding Children in Care, the following procedures have been implemented in the North Vancouver School District:

- 1) A person has been appointed in each school to monitor the success of children in care (CIC) and promote appropriate interventions.
- 2) Initial rosters of CIC have been updated in consultation with local MCFD offices.
- 3) Information is shared between district, schools and the MCFD in a manner that is consistent with the interests of CIC.
- 4) Children in temporary care arrangements, by agreement or in the home of a relative, are included in monitoring and support functions.

The School District will use BCeSIS (student information system) reporting capabilities and locally developed software applications to assist with the monitoring and tracking of these students. Evidence will include achievement data, grade transitions, attendance, and monitoring of behaviour.

Conclusion

Student achievement in the North Vancouver School District continues to be at a consistently high level in relation to provincial averages and some notable improvements have been evidenced in the past year. There is an enduring commitment to professional development and staff in-service to advance instructional practices, with particular emphasis on the areas of *assessment of, as, and for learning* to support continuous improvement in student achievement.

The School District has developed comprehensive strategies within the *District Achievement Contract (2008-11)* that are closely integrated with the strengths and challenges identified within this report. We are confident that these plans will help advance our ongoing efforts to improve student achievement. As a School District we are proud of the gains that have been made this past year and are determined to continue to make important improvements for the benefit of each of our learners.

Respectfully submitted,

[Original Signed]

John Lewis
Superintendent of Schools