

The Superintendent's Report on Student Achievement School District 42 – Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows December 2010

Introduction

The Superintendent's Report on Student Achievement is designed to give us a snapshot of how we are doing in terms of the goals we set in our Annual Achievement Contract. It is intended to allow us to synthesize all the data we currently have and sets us up for a more lengthy focus on achievement to be done at the end of June.

Current successes will be reported on the following areas of focus:

- Early Learning Opportunities
- Kindergarten as a Play Based method for learning
- Early Reading Intervention Programs
- Using Technology to Assist Learning
- Six Year Graduation Rate

Early Learning Opportunities

- Eight StrongStart Centres continue to operate with increased registration and attendance at each centre.
- At least 45 Ready Set Learn activities (some including a PALS focus) are scheduled for this school year. These events focus on providing learning activities for parents and preschoolers. Maple Ridge Parks and Recreation has allowed us to advertise these sessions in their Seasonal Recreation Guides and we are hoping this will increase attendance at these events.
- Welcome to Kindergarten continues to operate in 12 schools.
- SD42 staff continues to be active participants at the community Early Learning Table. This Table is extremely active in developing and expanding community opportunities for families of preschoolers. Initiatives include: partnering with a community agency to open a preschool at Eric Langton for vulnerable families; continued using the Eric Langton HIVE to support a number of program opportunities including a "Moms are Us" group run by community services to support young Moms in developing confidence and skills so they can attend StrongStart programs. Financially the School District has continued to support community agencies in offering School's Cool programming (for children who have not had preschool experience) and Mother Goose (for parents and toddlers to develop speech and oral language skills). The School's Cool data has shown a significant gain in student's developmental profiles over an 8 week period and the Mother Goose programs are extremely well attending (with wait lists for each session).

Kindergarten as a Play Based method for learning

What is improving?

Kindergarten teachers understanding of:

- How to develop and implement a play based, project oriented kindergarten program
- How to include active, hands on programming that facilitates the learning of all children but particularly boys
- How boys learn differently from girls and how teachers can enhance the quality of their interactions with boys
- The importance of having “developmentally appropriate” expectations, focusing on developing the “whole child” and offering activities and interventions that build students’ skills and abilities particularly in the areas of fine motor, oral language and increasing attention/time on task.

What evidence confirms this area of improvement?

Observation of Kindergarten classrooms this Fall (both full and half day programs) compared to the 09/10 school year. It is very notable in the majority of kindergarten classrooms that students are:

- Spending much longer periods of time engaging in project based learning within a “play” environment
- Engaging in more “hands on” activities and activities that involve movement and creativity
- More involved in activities that engage them in “inquiry” and problem solving and less time “sitting in circle” or engaging in pencil/paper activities
- More joyful.

The expectation is that when the kindergarten data is collected in May 2011 that:

- There will be an overall reduction in the % of students considered “at risk”
- The % of boys who are considered “at risk” will have reduced.

Early Reading Intervention Programs

The Reading Racer Summer Literacy Program is coordinated by the Elementary Facilitators. The four-week program begins in early July, and runs Monday through Thursday. The half-day program’s focus is on reading and writing through small-group instruction for our most at risk grade 1 students. When possible, there is a strong parent education component, with parents and caregivers participating at the beginning and at the end of each day.

Reading Racers:

There were three classes of 16 grade one students. They were among the lowest 5% of our grade one students from across the district from 2009/2010. Over the summer they made an average gain of over 3.5 levels per student, the range of growth was 0 to 10 levels. This was almost 8 times their rate of progress over the previous 10 months in grade one.

How are we planning to maintain and improve these results?

In September, the district's Elementary Facilitator met with principals to discuss implementing a follow-up plan with the new classroom and support teachers. Together they reviewed the student's summer progress as well as shared which teaching strategies were best suited to that individual student and how these could be replicated/adapted/modified during the current school year within the existing classroom setting.

What results do we expect from our anticipated actions?

We anticipate that with this added and continued support our students will continue to hold the gains that they achieved over the summer programs and continue to improve their reading throughout the year. The program will also continue this summer to help another cohort of students.

Using Technology to Assist Learning

School District No. 42 has refocused our one to one laptop program (along with many other initiatives) on 21st Century Skills. Our primary focus is on inquiry and challenge-based learning that combines the strengths of traditional learning with new directions that engage students and extend and deepen their thinking.

Students today need an increasing array of '21st Century' skills that enable them to meet new challenges, solve problems, and use the tools and technology of today and tomorrow.

Inquiry and challenge-based learning combine the strengths of traditional learning with new directions that engage students and extend and deepen their learning.

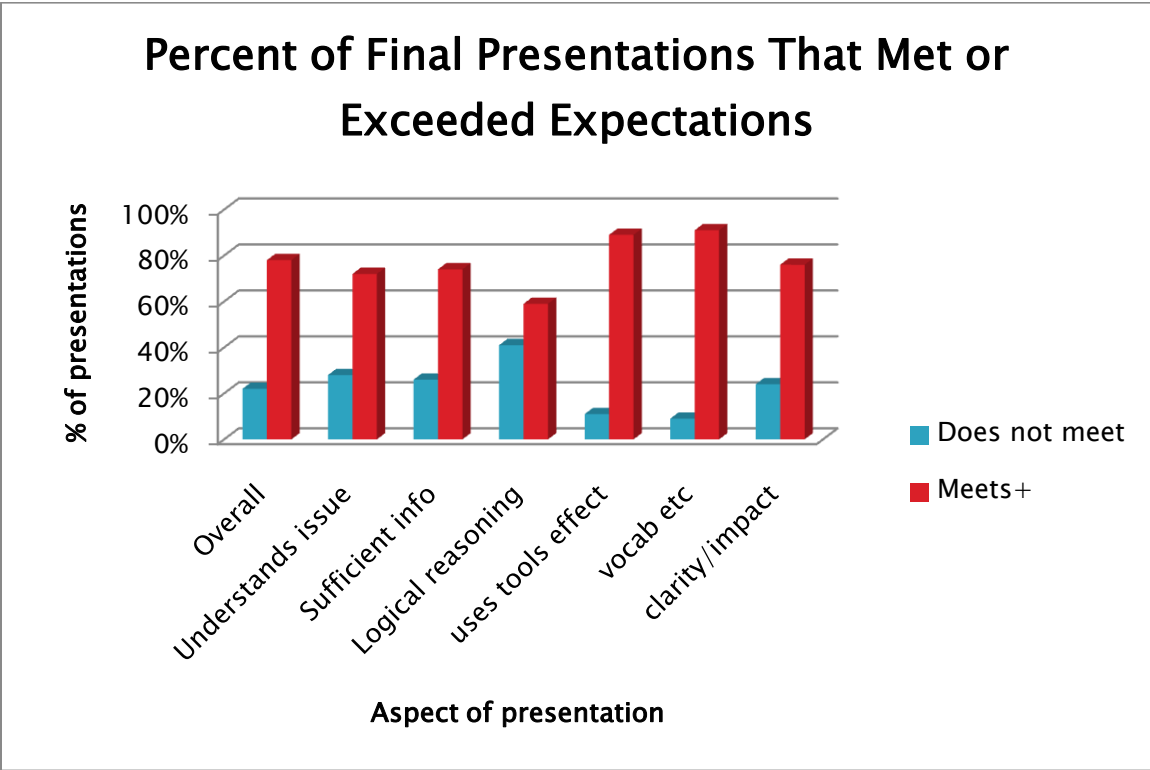
This project was designed to build on the strengths in improving writing, the strong capacity for supporting technology integration, and increasing research on the impact of inquiry and challenge.

A Note Regarding Student Achievement

2009/10 was the first year that many teachers focused on sustained inquiry and 21st Century skills; in less than 5 months, they introduced students to the skills, processes and strategies needed, as well as providing ongoing instruction in new technologies.

This is a complex and difficult master set of skills. The results exceeded the expectations of the project team and are a credit to the teachers and students.

The results are particularly encouraging in those classrooms where teachers had no previous experience using laptops in their classrooms.



Six Year Graduation Rate

In SD42, the six year graduation rate for resident students demonstrates improvement. Our vision and resulting action plan including the allocation of resources such as time, energy, and initiating strategies for improvement are beginning to produce results. As we continue to deliver curriculum recognizing individual differences, vary assessment strategies, and focus on personalized learning, we are confident our achievement results will become even stronger. Together, we have made a commitment to focus our energies to meet the needs of our students and to move towards a more “engaging” secondary system. The commitment to improve our schools in a variety of areas will allow our system to better meet the needs of our 21st Century learners.

What is improving:

- Over the past five years the six year graduation rate for resident students has continuously improved.
- Six year graduation rates for our resident students are now at a respectable level when compared to other districts in our region.

What evidence confirms these improvements?

The following chart indicates our progress with respect to the six year graduation rate. As noted, improvements are indicated each year in many important areas.

Rate (%)	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
All Students	78	81	82	84	84
Female	82	87	87	85	87
Male	74	75	77	82	80
Aboriginal (included in figures above)	61	63	64	59	63

Count of Successful Students	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
All Students	877	846	938	1032	1055
Female	454	438	484	502	557
Male	423	408	454	530	498
Aboriginal (included in figures above)	50	59	65	58	76

We believe that we will see a continued improvement as we move towards more personalized learning and a more engaging environment. We are introducing several ways of using technology as a tool to assist us with personalization. As well, we will continue to offer more choice for students so that they are engaged in their learning. Finally, we are continuing to look at how our secondary schools are organized and structured and will continue to engage in dialogue around if this current system is best for kids.

NB: It is important to note that if we were not actively seeking ways of “keeping kids in school”, our six year grad rates would be even higher. We consciously decided that we would be prouder of the lower grad rate if it included students who would have left our system in the past.

Current challenges will be reported in the following areas of focus:

- Aboriginal student achievement in kindergarten and early primary
- Primary reading levels at a stand still
- Gap between genders on the six year graduation rates
- School based marks lower than provincial exam scores

Aboriginal student achievement in kindergarten and early primary

The % of aboriginal students who are considered “at risk” in kindergarten and early primary concerns us.

What evidence gives rise to this concern?

- The June 2009 and June 2010 data that was collected by kindergarten teachers indicated that students of aboriginal background are significantly more at risk in all areas of development
- Conversations with kindergarten teachers this Fall indicate that they are still significantly concerned about the progress of many of their students of aboriginal background.
- Further investigation as to why this is occurring and how we can address the issues is a priority.

The primary focus for the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement focuses on Improving the Cultural Awareness for Aboriginal Learners. We now need to place some emphasis on assisting young aboriginal learners with basic skills as they first enter the school system so that they do not start out with an academic disadvantage.

Primary reading levels at a stand still

Reading Levels (PM Benchmarks)

	06-07		07-08		08-09		09-10	
Grade 1 (Below 7 Reading)	7.0% n=778	53 male 45 female 6 aboriginal	10.0% n=771	58 male 19 female 17 aboriginal	11% n=838	70 male 24 female 10 aboriginal	10% n=825	54 male 32 female 17 aboriginal
Grade 2 (Below 17 Reading)	7.7% n=775	38 male 22 female 9 aboriginal	9.0% n=832	49 male 25 female 3 aboriginal	11% n=813	58 male 34 female 21 aboriginal	11% n=884	60 male 40 female 11 aboriginal

Data collected for the 2009–10 Achievement Contract, indicated very little change in our student’s performance with regards to early literacy. We now have 4 years of trend data that allows us to better target intervention strategies like our Reading Racers summer program.

The district is actively exploring intervention strategies for all at risk learners. These strategies include Reading Racer teaching techniques embedded in the regular classroom and iPod technology in the primary grades to improve reading and oral language.

In our schools we are using literacy data boards to track our students’ progress and to ensure that people and resources are assigned appropriately.

Gap between genders on the six year graduation rates

There continues to be a gap between male graduates and female graduates ranging between 3% and 10%. In 2009-2010, the percentage gap was 7% where females graduated at a higher rate. We will continue to have discussions at all High Schools that will allow us to begin to understand why boys do not do as well and seemingly are not as engaged as female students.

This information will direct us to begin to develop strategies for learning that are directly linked to boys. This data also provides us evidence that supports our thinking that we need to move down the pathway of using technology to assist with learning.

School based marks lower than provincial exam scores

We are just beginning to examine the results of English 10 school based and provincial exam marks. Interestingly, those students who complete with a percentage above 60, score better, by 1% on school based marks than provincial exam scores, while those students receiving under 60%, achieve better on school based marks by 11%. We have asked the Ministry to provide the results for all of the other examinable courses and will review when received.

We believe looking at this data in this way will provide us with some momentum on discussing the value of Assessment FOR Learning and the need for ongoing feedback with classroom teachers at the Secondary level. We believe that the school based mark should virtually always be higher than the exam mark if sufficient feedback, ongoing assessment for learning and many ways to represent learning is happening in the classroom.

Report on the work following implementation of Recommendation of the Representative of Children and Youth regarding Children in Care

Categories of Children in Care successfully identified and monitored:

- 2009/2010: Categories of Children in Care successfully identified and being monitored: Continuing Care Orders, and Temporary Care Orders when known.
- 2010/2011: Categories of Children in Care successfully identified and being monitored: Continuing Care Orders, Children in Homes of a Relative, Youth on Youth Agreements, and Youth on Agreements for Young Adults, and Temporary Care Orders when known.

Structures in place to provide effective communication among MCFD offices, social workers, foster parents and schools:

- Integrated Case Management Meetings, and email communication.
- District staff meets face-to-face with each school contact one or more times each year.
- District staff is also in communication as needed with MCFD staff.

Evidence and data is being collected to determine if monitoring and structures are having an impact:

- Attendance and achievement is being monitored to assess student progress and work to improve outcomes for Children in Care.

Conclusion to the Superintendent's Report on Achievement

The biggest benefit to this report is that it brings educators together to dig deep into learning data and get focused on taking some action if the data is not at the level that we wish it to be. It allows us to begin to make long term plans using trend data that shows either growth over time or shows that the current intervention is not working. We will continue to do a better job of this as we search for meaningful data that demonstrates the true measures of what we value in terms of student learning in SD42. We have begun to shift our focus from “content based learning” to “skill based learning” and will be looking at data in the future that supports this new emphasis to better meet the needs of the new kind of learner. We are committed to getting to excellence, putting students first, and counting what counts.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Unwin
Superintendent of School