



School District 36 (Surrey)

Superintendent's Year End Report

Chairperson McNally and Members of the Board:

At the end of each school year, the Board is provided with a Superintendent's Report at its final public meeting. This Report is not part of the provincial accountability requirement. Rather, it is intended to highlight just a few of the many significant accomplishments over the past year, as well as outline areas for priority attention in 2010/11. Once again, this year, it is a pleasure to present the Board with this Report and acknowledge the remarkable work being done throughout the district by employees who are so clearly committed to shared values and goals of supporting learning success for every student.

A Look Back:

This year, I am pleased to share that we are achieving significant gains in our programs to support early learning through a focus on literacy. For the past several years we have acted on the understanding that providing quality supports and carefully constructed learning environments for young children will pay dividends in the long term. The child who is engaged in literacy-rich home and classroom experiences is much more likely to move with greater ease from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" and then into the lifetime literacy skills that are key for our community's success. The Board has provided resources to support literacy initiatives throughout the district and it is clear that such funding has made a difference as we see more children demonstrating capacity in reading and writing, both of which make the rest of their learning more accessible.

- In response to parent requests for help in supporting their children's learning, a number of programs have grown in scope and levels of participation. Programs such as Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS) for pre-kindergarten, Supporting Parents Actively Reading with Kids (SPARK) for parents of kindergarten children whose first language is not English, and experiential Mathematics presentations for elementary parents have been well subscribed.
- We are also seeing gains in numeracy, and it is especially encouraging to note that teachers who have been involved in the literacy project are identifying the transferability of the instructional and assessment skills from their literacy work to numeracy. As the Board remembers, public consultation over the past few years has zeroed in on the need to highlight numeracy at the elementary level in order to build student capacity into the secondary school years and beyond. The increasing number of schools signed up for the district's numeracy project indicates a strong commitment to that area.

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- Our secondary students have continued to excel academically, in the arts and on the playing field. It is particularly gratifying that we have so many students taking advantage of opportunities to engage in learning experiences that focus on career education, work experience, employability skills, apprenticeship training, and cooperative education, which provide a selection of rich and varied pathways toward graduation. These programs have served our students well in supporting their decisions around career and post-secondary options.
- I also want to make specific mention of our commitment to Aboriginal learners. Trustees remember well that the Board promised, in signing the 2008 Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement, to pay direct attention to the quality of the connection and of service to Aboriginal students and their families. Today, we see more and more Aboriginal culture being shared in context as part of the curriculum for all students. We also see that efforts in the above-mentioned areas of literacy and numeracy are being made more relevant and engaging for Aboriginal students as part of the multi-cultural classroom rather than through "pull out" sessions. The work to build a new relationship with Aboriginal people is a long journey, best achieved one child at a time. Based on the passion and dedication of all parties to the Enhancement Agreement, we are well on the path to that destination.

A Look Forward:

The Board has worked through a budget process that involved many difficult decisions. Essentially, there are more high priority needs than there are funds to resource all of them. It is reasonable to consider that fiscal challenges and ongoing constraint will be part of the coming year and beyond as well. With that in mind, I recommend to the Board that, in addition to the dialogue and consultation on how we can maintain our current programs and services, we also engage in a future-oriented focus and consider the following key issues:

- How does the district ensure that our students are engaged in learning environments in keeping with 21st century skills and expectations? Are we making instructional and resourcing decisions to help learners build on the core skills of literacy and numeracy in a way that expands their capacity in critical thinking, real world problem solving, collaboration, creativity and innovation, all in a socially responsible context? When we address these questions, what does our declaration of a preferred future do to our current program design (curriculum and assessment), the use of time and space, resourcing and achievement expectations? How do we connect our students' school experiences with the ubiquitous access to the technology that surrounds them for much of their "out of school "time? Are we carefully developing students' critical thinking and collaborative skills in a high technology world? How can we support that effort in a sustainable way, particularly in our secondary schools?
- What will secondary schools look like in two years, five years and ten years? Given the ready access people have to learning in a variety of venues - real and virtual - how can our current grade 8-12 schools adapt and what support can we give them as a district?

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We are preparing students for full membership and participation in a rapidly changing global environment. Our communities look different today than they did a decade ago, as does the work force. Some of what we know is possible today wasn't even dreamed about at the end of the last century. It is incumbent on educators to move forward in the same adaptable and flexible manner that we expect of our students.

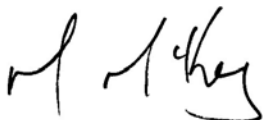
In summarizing this school year, I believe that the Board has seen exceptional efforts and countless successes as a result of many factors, among which the most important may be:

- an unwavering belief among your 8000+ employees that we do make a difference and that Surrey School District is an organization where a commitment to "Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day" is evident in the quality work being done across the district;
- a high degree of mutual trust and respect modeled by Trustees and valued throughout the district's workforce and the community we serve. Such respect allows us to focus on achieving gains for students and it also serves as a valuable lesson for our young people as they watch us "walk the walk" regarding social responsibility and see our ability to resolve issues and problems in a productive manner; and,
- excitement about our role in creating Canada's future right here in Surrey. Our significant growth, the diversity in culture and ethnicity and the need to develop partnerships among service providers are all part of who we have become in this community. As the rest of the country begins to engage in the early stages of growth and change based on demographic variables, we are moving into refinements and greater sophistication of the programs and services that meet our community's needs. We are ahead of the curve and the rest of the country is taking note of how we deal with complexity in a way that is aligned, coherent and sustainable.

It is an honour to serve this Board and to work with the dedicated professional staff in your employ. I can assure the Board, with a high degree of confidence, that what you see in schools when you visit and participate in events and activities is representative of the good work going on every day throughout the district. While there is no shortage of complexity and challenge in meeting our mandate, we are well placed to continue to provide high quality service. In Surrey, we continue to create the circumstances where kids flourish!

Best wishes for the summer season.

Respectfully,



Mike McKay
Superintendent of Schools