



School District 36 (Surrey)

School Planning Council

Resource Manual

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District Administration

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Board of School Trustees of School District 36 (Surrey) values the contributions of parents as partners in our education system. The Board believes that parent involvement helps to promote a positive learning environment.

School improvement is best accomplished where the collaborative efforts of parents, teachers, the school principal and, where applicable, students are focused on results and in helping students achieve success.

- The passage of *Bill 34, The School Amendment Act*, provided for the formation of School Planning Councils. The purpose of School Planning Councils is to formally acknowledge the importance of parental involvement in improving student achievement. School Planning Councils are intended to formalize the role of parents in all schools in British Columbia.

The Board is committed to assisting parents, staff, and principals in establishing effective, positive and productive School Planning Councils in every school. It views the Councils as having an important role to play in planning for school improvement.

The Board recognizes its responsibility to ensure that School Planning Councils

- a) function effectively in accordance with the *School Act*,
- b) operate in a manner which reflects high ethical standards, and,
- c) represent the school community in the process of school planning.

1.2 Using This Manual

This comprehensive guide has been developed to help School Planning Council members fulfill their roles and responsibilities and the Council's mandate in an effective manner. It explains the Ministry of Education regulations and outlines what they mean for Councils, principals, and School Boards. It explains in detail the roles and responsibilities of each member and outlines strategies for the effective operation of the Councils.

Suggestions are also provided to help School Planning Councils actively participate in the development of the annual school plan. Advice is provided on interpreting and analyzing data. Practical tips are also offered to help prepare for and run elections and meetings, establish consensus, and communicate effectively with their school communities.

School Planning Council members should use this manual as a resource. It is not intended to be prescriptive. A detailed table of contents, along with a list of sample forms, checklists, reports, and other useful items, has been included to allow readers to readily locate the particular information that they may need.

ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL PLANNING COUNCIL

2.1 Mandate

The School Planning Council is an advisory body. The primary responsibility of School Planning Councils is to consult with the school community in developing, monitoring, and reviewing school plans for improving student achievement.

The District's policy on School Planning Councils defines the Council's role as follows:

- a) Provision of input to and approval of a proposed school plan;
- b) Consultation on matters referred to it by the Board, the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designate;
- c) Consultation on matters pertaining to student achievement referred to it by the Principal, the teaching staff, or by the Parent Advisory Council.

It is important that the School Planning Council be proactive in reaching out to all members of the school community. The school community consists of all parents, students, administrators, teachers and support staff. School plans should reflect the characteristics, values and needs of the school community. The School Planning Council must meet requirements outlined in the *School Act*:

“By a date specified by the Board, a School Planning Council must prepare and submit to the Board a plan for the school in respect of improving student achievement and other matters contained in the Board's accountability contract relating to the school.” 8.3(2)

“A School Planning Council must consult with the Parents' Advisory Council during the preparation of the school plan.” 8.3(3)

The School Planning Council provides advice to the School Board with respect to:

- allocation of staff and resources in the school
- matters contained in the Board's Accountability Contract relating to the school
- educational services and educational programs in the school.

For the purpose of consultation on the above matters, the Principal acts on behalf of the Board.

The School Planning Council does not engage in discussion or provide advice regarding:

- a) Personnel matters;
- b) Personal and confidential information about students, parents, teachers and other employees;
- c) Performance or conduct of individual students, parents, and employees;
- d) Terms and conditions of collective agreements and/or individual employment contracts;
- e) Activities beyond the advisory and consultative roles set out in the *School Act* and this policy.

2.2 Membership

The School Planning Council consists of:

- The school principal
- One teacher representative elected by secret ballot from the teaching staff
- Three representatives elected by secret ballot from the school's Parent Advisory Council (at least one representative must be an elected officer of the Parent Advisory Council)
- In the case of schools enrolling grades 10–12, one representative of the student body.

These persons comprise the voting members of the Council. This does not preclude inviting others to participate in discussions at meetings. In order to facilitate meaningful consultations, and collaborative dialogue, School Planning Councils are encouraged to provide for balanced representation of parents, teachers, and, where applicable, students.

Note: A parent is defined in the *School Act* as the:

- Guardian of the person of the student or child
- Person legally entitled to custody of the student or child, or
- Person who usually has the care and control of the student or child

2.3 Elections – Timelines and Procedures

Electing Parent Representatives

Parent Advisory Councils will need to establish or modify bylaws to provide for School Planning Council representation. The school Principal should consult with the Parent Advisory Council on its bylaws for the election of representatives to the School Planning Council to ensure that the bylaws safeguard the rights of parents to participate in this decision. A sample constitution and Bylaws for PACs is available in the *BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils Leadership Manual* and on the BCCPAC website at www.bccpac.bc.ca Sample nomination forms have been included in the Appendix (8.5).

By May 31st of each year, the Principal of each school shall advise the Parent Advisory Council, if one exists, and the teachers in the school, of the need to elect representatives for the coming school year and the required process.

Processes for electing parent representatives are to be determined collaboratively between the principal and the Parent Advisory Council. The Parent Advisory Council has an important role to play in encouraging and generating interest in the nominations and the election process. They may vary in each school community. A suggested, but not prescribed process is outlined in 8.4 of Appendix A.

Electing Teacher Representatives

The Principal and the school's Surrey Teachers' Association representative(s) shall work together to ensure that the holding of the election for the School Planning Council's teacher representative is carried out by secret ballot and in accordance with the *School Act*.

If no teacher representative is elected by the staff by September 30th, no teacher representative shall be appointed. The Principal shall consider whether he or she is able to make any recommendations to the Board for an alternate appointment, and shall report to the Board by October 15th.

Student Representatives

In schools enrolling students in grades 10, 11, or 12, a student in one of these grades is appointed to the School Planning Council by the principal.

Term of Office and Eligibility

The term of office of a person appointed or elected under this section to the School Planning Council must not be more than one year. A representative may serve more than one term.

An employee of any Board is not eligible for election or appointment as a parent representative on the School Planning Council.

SCHOOL PLANNING COUNCIL OPERATIONS

3.1 Effective School Planning Councils

Although the School Planning Council will provide advice to the school principal and to the School Board on a wide range of issues, its efforts should focus primarily on the issues that fall within the purpose or mandate established by provincial legislation and Board policy. Establishing a set of priorities for the year will help the Council stay focused and be effective.

Effective School Planning Councils are those that:

- focus on student learning and do what is in the best interests of all students;
- are actively involved in setting school priorities for improving student achievement;
- promote meaningful parental and community involvement and actively seek the views of their school communities;
- have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities;
- include members who represent the diverse views of their school communities;
- keep well informed about school and Board policies and procedures;
- have clear and consistent processes for decision making;
- communicate with the community about their activities;
- maintain high ethical standards;
- have members who have developed mutual trust and respect for one another.

3.2 Preparing and Training School Planning Council Members

Every year, a number of new School Planning Council members may be elected. Each new member will bring his or her unique talents, strengths, and expertise to the Council. These new members must be given opportunities to become acquainted with their roles and responsibilities so that they are aware of the importance of the commitment they are making, understand their duties as Council members, and become effective participants.

Planning

To help new School Planning Council members become acquainted with their roles, your Council might want to prepare an orientation package that includes resources such as the following:

- a copy of this resource manual
- information about the school, the local School Board, and the British Columbia Ministry of Education
- a school profile and related achievement data
- the district's annual goals, accountability contract and strategic plan.

The Council's first meetings provide opportunities to introduce new members to other members and orient them to the education system and their role in it. Agendas for the initial meetings might include some of the following activities:

- welcoming members and completing introductions
- orienting members to the Council's past school plans
- reviewing achievement data
- reviewing the work undertaken in previous year's and identifying needs for the future
- establishing dates for future meetings

3.3 Roles and Responsibilities

School Board

The School Board has the responsibility to:

- ensure that a School Planning Council is in place for each school
- establish a process to ensure that the school plan developed by the School Planning Council is the result of consultation with the entire school community including parents, staff and students
- develop Board policy and regulations governing the operation of School Planning Councils
- consult with School Planning Councils

Principal

As chair of the School Planning Council, the Principal:

- provides leadership in the collaborative work of the School Planning Council
- notifies the school community that a School Planning Council will be formed
- communicates purpose and timelines to the school community
- informs parents, teachers, other staff and students about the work of the School Planning Council
- assembles existing information related to school level student achievement and the school district accountability contract. This information includes but is not limited to:
 - graduation rates;
 - grade-to-grade transitions (grades 6 to 12);
 - Foundation Skills Assessment information (grades 4 & 7);
 - parent, student and staff satisfaction survey results; and
 - other information about student performance.
- in collaboration with the Parent Advisory Council and school staff, establishes mechanisms to promote effective two-way communication between the school community and the School Planning Council
- ensures that the plan developed by the School Planning Council is the result of consultation with the entire school community including parents, teaching and non-teaching staff, and students

Teachers

Teachers have an interest in ensuring that their representative is a key communicator and contributor to the work of the Council. They:

- elect, by secret ballot, one representative to the School Planning Council
- establish a process for the representative to:
 - receive input and direction from the school's teachers; and
 - inform the school's teachers about the School Planning Council's work
 - facilitate continuous two-way conversation between the staff and the School Planning Council

Parent Advisory Council

The Parent Advisory Council has an interest in ensuring that their representatives speak for the broader parent community. The Parent Advisory Council:

- elects, by secret ballot, three representatives to the School Planning Council as per district policy
- establishes or modifies its bylaws to establish a School Planning Council
- establishes mechanisms, in collaboration with the principal, to promote effective two-way communication between the school community and the School Planning Council
- assists the School Planning Council as requested

The Role of the Parent Representative

- to advise the Principal of your views on any matter relating to the school that is within the School Planning Council's mandate

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- to take advantage of opportunities to express views at regional meetings and forums organized by the school district
 - to work toward building a positive consensus-building school environment
 - to respect other Council members
 - to encourage parents and other community members to become involved
 - to resolve issues in the spirit of the best interests of the whole school

The Role of the Teacher Representative

- contribute to the discussions of the School Planning Council;
- solicit views from staff to share with the School Planning Council;
- communicate information back to staff groups.

The Role of the Student Representative

The student is at the centre of the education system and, in the higher grades, has a crucial role to play as a participant on the School Planning Council. The attitudes and values the student brings to Council will help influence decisions made by the principal and the Council, and therefore help determine the direction of the school. The student's role on the School Planning Council is:

- to advocate for a strong School Planning Council;
- to seek student views to share with the Council; and
- to communicate information back to fellow students.

3.4 Planning and Conducting Effective Meetings

Planning an Agenda

A carefully planned and organized agenda is the foundation of a successful meeting. A good agenda briefly outlines what you intend to discuss and in what order. Items on the agenda should reflect the concerns and interests of your school community. The chair develops the agenda and asks if anyone has items to add at the beginning of the meeting. The chair:

- tailors the agenda to the time available, ensuring each item is allotted sufficient time for discussion
- reviews previous minutes and includes items that need revisiting on the agenda
- includes time for business arising from the minutes
- limits meetings to a maximum of two hours
- distributes the agenda to members seven days before the meeting
- ensures the whole school community is aware of meeting dates and agenda items

Chairing the Meeting

Characteristics of a Good Chairperson

- recognizes the similarities and differences in groups
- emphasizes interests and concerns
- acknowledges and values the different roles people play in group situations
- works towards building trust, respect, empathy and effective communication between Council members
- fosters collaboration on all School Planning Council issues
- allows for evaluation at the end of the meeting

Responsibilities of the Chairperson

- to ensure that issues for discussion are within the School Planning Council's mandate
- to determine whether issues will be consultative, advisory or require a School Planning Council decision

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- to set the climate of the meeting
 - to provide the agenda seven days prior to the meeting date
 - to ensure the agenda is approved as the first order of business
 - to keep the discussion flowing in a collaborative fashion
 - to summarize the main points before moving to the next item or before making a decision
 - to encourage participation from all members
 - to acknowledge that each person's comments contribute to the success of the meeting
 - to clarify the results of collaborative discussion and to summarize the actions decided upon
 - to be a harmonizer during conflict

Simple Rules for Chairing a Meeting

- the chairperson calls the meeting to order
- the meeting's formality depends on the chairperson, the group's size and the group's preference
- the chairperson recognizes members before they speak
- each item is entitled to full and free debate by individual members—one at a time
- each person desiring to speak should be allowed to speak once before anyone speaks for a second time
- motions should be dealt with according to a parliamentary procedure book (see E6)
- the chairperson is responsible for moving the meeting along and ensuring no one monopolizes the floor
- only one subject may be discussed at a time
- if time does not permit full discussion of an item, a motion may be made to table the item for discussion at another meeting
- every member has equal rights

Another way to provide the opportunity for the School Planning Council to communicate is to distribute the meeting's minutes and the action plan. For a variety of reasons, people may not be able to attend meetings, but they may still be both interested and committed members of the school community. If the school budget can't accommodate sending minutes to each member of the school community, they may be posted on the School Planning Council, Parent Advisory Council, and staff bulletin boards.

Effective Meeting Strategies

You will know that a Council meeting has been effective when all participants feel that:

- the meeting had a purpose;
- they have a sense of accomplishment;
- they contributed to the discussion;
- they were valued by others;
- creative ideas, alternatives, or solutions were generated;
- they were able to share different points of view;
- they are committed to the decisions made and the actions taken;
- they are willing to work together again.

School Planning Councils should have the opportunity to fully discuss every agenda issue. Generally speaking, the chair is responsible for facilitating this process.

Meetings are most successful and productive when Council members listen and present their ideas effectively. The key to understanding is listening to and really hearing what others are saying. A major barrier to effective communication is a tendency to evaluate without listening first to what others have to say. The following will help you listen to and really understand what others are saying:

- Give your full attention to the speaker.
- Think about what the speaker is saying and take notes, if you find that helpful.
- Ask questions or paraphrase to clarify meaning (e.g., "Do you mean . . . ?", "What I hear you saying is . . .", "Let me see if I understand what you are saying . . .").

Council members should make every effort to present and convey information, opinions, and feelings clearly and succinctly. Doing so will promote good communication within the Council. The following will help you present your point of view clearly:

- Think about what you want to say.
- Jot down key points.
- Avoid using jargon that others may not understand.
- Ask for feedback to ensure that everyone understands your position.

The next three sections provide some suggestions to help the chair facilitate meetings. The techniques presented can be used to help participants express their views and solve problems.

Methods for Stimulating Discussion

In its advisory role, a School Planning Council should have ample opportunity to develop a full range of ideas surrounding an issue. The chair is responsible for facilitating this process. Listed below are a number of techniques that can be used to assist participants in expressing their views:

Chair initiation. The chair invites a wide range of people to speak, and all who wish to speak are given the opportunity, with time limits given to each speaker.

Pairing. People are randomly paired off to discuss an issue and then report back to the group.

Table-go-round. The chair invites each person around the table, in order, to speak to an issue (if he or she chooses), with a time limit given for each speaker.

Absolute quiet. School Planning Council members are given a specific amount of time to think, read, or make notes relating to the issue being discussed.

Methods for Generating Ideas

Brainstorming. The following ground rules help brainstorming become an effective problem-solving tool:

- Work with the whole Council.
- Ensure that everyone is clear on the issue to be brainstormed.
- Invite ideas from Council members, recording them on a chalkboard or flipchart.
- Accept all ideas without either positive or negative comment.
- Encourage quantity, not quality – the more ideas the better.
- Modify and combine ideas.
- Finally, ask School Planning Council members to rank their ideas they feel are the best.

Roundtable. This process is similar to brainstorming, but with the group subdivided into small groups of four to six people. Give each group a time limit. Record all ideas on flipcharts and report back to the main group after the time limit has been reached.

Brain writing. This is similar to a round table, but with more individual participation. Give index cards to each group and ask each group member to write down one idea on each card. The cards are then exchanged and new ideas or comments are added other members of the group. A facilitator summarizes and groups the ideas and comments.

Methods for Facilitating Decision Making and Priority Setting

After ideas have been generated by one of the methods described above, the following strategies can be used to help the Council make decisions and set priorities:

Pro/con analysis. In this process, participants develop possible solutions for an important issue that needs to be resolved, and focus on the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives developed. It is best that members

complete this process before a motion is put forward and the issue is voted on or before members try to reach a decision by consensus.

Voting. After all ideas have been listed, each member votes on what he or she considers the three or four best ideas by putting a coloured sticker or a coloured check mark beside the ideas he or she thinks are best. The number of stickers or check marks beside each idea will determine the ranking (i.e., the idea with the most stickers beside it is first, etc.). The recorder then lists the ideas in the order of their ranking.

Value voting. This method is useful for obtaining feedback when time is limited. The chair/co-chairs ask each member to take a position on each idea (e.g., strongly agree, agree, or strongly disagree). Each position category is then tallied to arrive at a direction, rather than a decision.

Multi-voting. This variation of brainstorming allows the group to narrow down the number of ideas presented. After brainstorming, the ideas are numbered and similar ideas are combined. Each member then writes down the numbers of those that he or she feels should be discussed. No more than one-quarter of the ideas on the master list should be chosen. After getting feedback from members, those ideas in which few were interested are eliminated and the remaining ideas are kept for further discussion.

After the Meeting: Evaluation and distribution of minutes and action plan

One way to provide an opportunity for the school community to communicate is to encourage participants to evaluate the meeting. A good evaluation form asks specific questions that seek information with which to build more effective meetings. Build time into the latter part of the agenda for participants to complete the evaluation form. Providing this opportunity to participants reinforces the value of their input and allows the chair to alter future meetings if necessary. A sample evaluation form can be found in the Appendix (8.6).

3.5 Making Decisions

Running a School Planning Council meeting can be as formal or as informal as your Council decides, but even informal meetings require some ground rules to help people work together and reach good decisions.

A School Planning Council is an advisory body. Votes are not taken except on the approval of a proposed school plan. On matters other than the school plan, it is desirable to offer a consensus opinion but it is not required.

Consensus

In trying to reach consensus, members have to put much effort into trying to find alternatives to which everyone can agree. Because everyone helps reach, and must agree to, the final decision, all members have the chance to influence and understand the decision. As a result, the final decision may be reached with less conflict than with a formal vote and should receive everyone's support. One caution: the chair should ensure that everyone is heard equally and that quieter or less assertive members are not overshadowed by more vocal or assertive members.

Consensus:

- gives all Council members an effective voice in decisions;
- builds on differing perspectives and values;
- allows for flexibility in arriving at solutions;
- can result in better-informed, more creative, balanced, and enduring decisions;
- ensures that final decisions have the support of everyone, thus promoting a sense of commitment to and ownership of the decisions;
- creates a sense of common purpose;

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- allows all Council members to maintain the integrity of their personal values while agreeing to a new solution.

The following are the basic steps to take to arrive at consensus:

- Identify the issue or problem.
- Relate the issue to goals.
- List the alternatives or solutions.
- Explore and weigh the solutions in terms of meeting agreed-on goals.
- Choose the solution that best meets the goals.
- Plan to implement the solution.

Arriving at a decision that everyone can support requires time, a clear process, skill, and the full participation of all members.

Here are some suggested phrases for the chair to use as Council members try to reach consensus:

- Let's begin by getting a reaction from everyone in the group.
- Let me summarize what I hear you saying.
- Let me repeat what I think I heard you say.
- Let me ask you. . . .
- Has everyone had the opportunity to express an opinion?
- Let me see if I can pull together a recommendation.
- Is anyone uncomfortable with this recommendation?
- Let's take five minutes to re-evaluate our positions and prepare statements to share with others.
- Do you want to table this question and discuss it again at the next meeting?

Consensus takes time, commitment, patience, and persistence. As a process, it will strengthen your team by building trust, valuing the diversity of opinions, and energizing and involving all members as equal participants.

Decisions by consensus that are null and void

Any decisions that contradict provincial laws and regulations, or district policy, are out of order and invalid.

3.6 Team Building

Trust and respect are essential if the members of your Council are to function effectively as a team. Team-building activities that include discussing the Council's purpose, goals, and vision are ways to build trust and get to know each other's beliefs, values, interests, and areas of strength. An orientation session prior to the first formal meeting might help begin this process. Building positive working relationships among Council members will strengthen and promote teamwork. As trust and respect develop, Council members will become more open to sharing opinions, taking risks, and resolving conflicts in a positive manner.

To different degrees, every group goes through the following four stages, although the length of each and the sequence will vary. It is helpful to be aware of these stages when you and your fellow members are feeling stuck, frustrated, or unproductive.

- *Forming.* Group members are polite, impersonal, watchful, and guarded.
- *Storming.* Some group members are trying to avoid conflict, while others are confronting people, opting out, having difficulty, or feeling stuck.

-
- *Norming.* Group members are developing skills in such areas as conflict resolution, listening to and evaluating other points of view, and giving feedback. They are also establishing procedures to deal with issues.
 - *Performing.* Group members are becoming resourceful, flexible, open, effective, close, and supportive.

3.7 Consultation

“To consult” means to seek advice, to confer, to discuss, or to deliberate on the views and opinions held by others. In the spirit of the policy and regulations regarding School Planning Councils, there are clear expectations that all partners be consulted:

- School Boards and principals are to seek advice from their School Planning Councils.
- School Planning Councils are to seek input from the parents and staff of their school community about matters under their consideration.

Consultation with Parents by School Planning Councils

One of the School Planning Council’s main purposes is to share information with parents and the community and to seek their ideas and views about matters under consideration by the Council. When and how this happens depends on the issues before the Council. Some issues may only require that information be provided to the school community. Other issues may require obtaining a formal position from the school community. Parent Advisory Councils are the representative body for all parents in the school community. It would be appropriate to seek the assistance of the PAC in sharing information and consulting with parents.

Any one or a combination of the following suggestions might be suitable methods of consultation and response:

- Hold a town-hall-style meeting to discuss issues and present information.
- Ask for input by distributing a survey, or send home a newsletter with a tear-off response form to be returned to the school.
- Conduct a telephone blitz of all parents.
- Hold focus group meetings at various times to ensure that all parents also have the opportunity to participate.
- Post information and requests for feedback on the school website.

For other ideas and suggestions that can help Councils become more knowledgeable about their communities and establish and maintain open channels of communication with the diverse groups that make up those communities, see Section 4 (Communication) in this manual.

Consultation with School Staff by School Planning Councils

The teacher representative is a key communicator between staff and the Council represents the views of the staff. The Council needs to establish processes that ensure the staff is consulted about the issues before it.

Consultation with School Planning Councils by Boards and Principals

To ensure that parents, through their School Planning Councils, are able to influence decisions affecting their children’s education, the School Planning Council legislation directs School Boards and principals to actively seek the views of their School Planning Councils on a variety of matters including:

- allocation of staff and resources in the school
- matters contained in the Board’s Accountability Contract relating to the school
- educational services and education programs in the school

3.8 Avoiding or Dealing With Conflict

Conflict is a natural part of human existence. In a structured environment, where mutual trust and respect prevail, it can be a positive force. It can encourage people to find creative solutions, clarify an issue, increase the involvement of members, encourage growth, and strengthen relationships. However, conflict also has an ugly side. Left uncontrolled, it can divert energy from the group, destroy morale, polarize individuals, deepen differences, obstruct progress, and create suspicion and distrust.

When conflict is resolved collaboratively, both the whole group and the individuals within the group are strengthened. It comes as no surprise that well-honed communication skills are essential to conflict resolution. This section outlines some ways to prevent, diffuse, and resolve conflict. To a large degree, conflict can be prevented or diffused at an early stage if differing points of view are handled carefully by the chair. Here are a few simple strategies for those chairing meetings to ensure that these differences are accommodated in a constructive manner:

- Focus the discussion on Council issues.
- Take control in a firm, positive, constructive way.
- Establish an agenda that is agreed on by all present.
- Establish ground rules for behaviour.
- Develop a code of ethics for Council members. See the example provided in the Appendix (8.3).
- Treat each person's concerns as legitimate.
- Use the group to help modify the situation. Ask questions such as "Allison is suggesting that we change the order of the agenda. What does the rest of the group think?"

Conflict can often be avoided and solutions more readily achieved when positive working relationships exist. It is important that Council members take the time to get to know each other's values, beliefs, and interests. The use of good communication skills will help clarify the Council's discussions and prevent misunderstanding and conflict. A code of ethics for school Council members will help all members understand what is expected.

Resolving Conflict

From time to time, School Planning Councils may find that they are not able to come to agreement on matters under their consideration. Consistently being unable to find common ground in decision making is almost certain to result in a dysfunctional Council.

In such cases, it is important that the Council takes time to identify the issues that seem to be triggering its disputes. Often, the volume of disputes may be reflective of unhappiness or uncertainty among members of the Council. Alternatively, the disputes may be a healthy sign of growth and development in your Council.

It is also possible that, in spite of all efforts of a Council to be productive and to work collegially as a team, the unhappiness among some Council members may be so great that it polarizes Council members on particular issues. Actions taken independently, such as sending unauthorized information home to parents on behalf of Council, can seriously jeopardize the Council's effectiveness. Other signs of dysfunction may be verbal abuse or harassment of other Council members or the chair, constantly interrupting speakers, interjecting derogatory comments, or displaying behaviour that is unbecoming of adults entrusted to represent their community. Such behaviour is bound to jeopardize attendance at meetings and to discourage potential members from seeking positions on the Council. As a result, the Council risks losing its credibility the confidence of the school community.

In such cases, it is especially important that the chair be willing to take firm and consistent action to restore order so that the Council can continue working towards achieving its goals. The following is a four-step approach to resolving conflict:

1. *Acknowledge the conflict.* As a group, acknowledge when a conflict exists and determine the source of the conflict. For example, is it related to facts? Goals? Processes? Values? Personal Preferences? Beliefs? Communication?
2. *Plan how to deal with the conflict.* Once the source of the conflict is defined, decide how to deal with it. This may be done by the chair, another individual on the Council, or the entire Council. (In particularly difficult times, it may be best to engage a person who has no association with the Council to facilitate discussion and problem solving.) At this stage, all Council members should reflect on the problem and be prepared to state their concerns and viewpoints.
3. *Provide time for discussion.* The chair or whoever is facilitating the discussion should introduce the problem and ask each member for input so that the nature and source of the conflict are clear. Acknowledging each person by listening attentively sets the tone for problem solving and opens the Council to a variety of solutions. Emotions should be accepted and dealt with since they are a part of conflict.
4. *Seek the best solution.* As viewpoints and solutions are described, the individual facilitating the discussion deals with them one at a time.

Following the discussion, the person facilitating the discussion may use a process for building consensus to arrive at a new solution. Council members will be asked the following questions: Can you live with this solution? Will you support the solution?

Depending on the nature of the conflict, it is sometimes best for Council members to have time to reflect on the proposed solution, with the decision to be finalized at a future meeting. If the conflict cannot be resolved, the group may wish to seek the assistance of resource staff at the school board.

3.9 Assessing Your Council's Effectiveness

It is important that your School Planning Council take time periodically to discuss and evaluate what it has been doing. All too often, School Planning Councils find that there is so much to do that there is little time left to reflect on or assess their direction and practices.

Evaluation forms or surveys are one way to collect information for the purposes of improving your meetings or Council processes. An impartial observer may also play a valuable role in assessing your Council's effectiveness. Your Council should be sure to factor in time for specific discussions regarding progress on strategic plans and action plans to ensure that you are making progress.

A sample questionnaire that School Planning Councils may want to use to gauge the Council's effectiveness is provided in the Appendix (8.7). Such a questionnaire could be distributed to Council members to gather their opinions. Council members should be told that they do not have to sign the questionnaire.

COMMUNICATION

4.1 Involving Parents and the Community

Parents play the first and most important role in their children's education and are key partners in building a quality education system. One purpose of the School Planning Council is to promote and support the involvement of all parents in their children's learning.

School Planning Councils can involve all parents by:

- providing parents with information and ideas about curriculum-related activities, decisions, planning, and how to help their children with their homework;
- communicating effectively with parents about school programs and children's progress;
- recruiting and organizing parents' help and support;
- identifying and using community resources and services that strengthen school programs, family relations, and student learning and development;
- inviting parents who have particular expertise to speak to the Council (e.g., a nurse to speak about the nutritional needs of children, a marketing professional to help the Council with a communication plan);
- helping parents establish home environments that support their children as students (e.g., helping them with homework, asking them about the day's events, showing an interest in their extracurricular activities, expressing care, and giving guidance).

This involvement contributes both to the children's success in school and to the quality of the school environment. Because parental involvement is so important, School Planning Councils need to break down any barriers between the home and the school and make the school a warm, receptive place for parents. School Planning Councils should encourage all parents to participate, welcome them to school Council meetings, and inform them of the many ways in which they can be involved.

Parents play a valuable role by being members of School Planning Councils. Celebrating the Council's successes and communicating its accomplishments to the community helps retain the commitment of current school Council members and encourages other parents and community representatives to become involved in the future. Involving parents throughout the year on committees and in other volunteer roles is an excellent way to spark interest and motivate parents to contribute in various ways to their children's education. *Every parent has something to contribute.*

4.2 Establishing Channels of Communication

Communication Is the Key

Communication is the key to ensuring strong partnerships and a successful School Planning Council. It is crucial to achieving increased involvement and greater influence for parents in their children's education. School Planning Councils must have sound methods of communicating with the school principal, with the School Board, with parents, with Parent Advisory Councils, and with each other.

Your Council and the School Community

The School Planning Council's communication strategy should also include an effective method of communicating with the school community on a regular basis. This process should in time become routine. Parent Advisory Councils have an active role to play in any communication strategy.

Your Council and Other School Planning Councils in Your Area

Periodically networking with other School Planning Councils can be extremely beneficial. Networking can occur in a variety of ways – for example, through meetings, teleconferencing, or e-mail – and can involve other School Planning Councils in your area, or all the School Planning Councils in a regional organization of Councils. Networking gives Councils the opportunity to share best practices; to learn what is new locally, regionally, and provincially; to feel supported and connected to a larger community; and to have a stronger voice at the board level or the provincial level.

Your Council and the Board

Establishing a good relationship with the Board is important. If you have any questions about the Board's initiatives, School Planning Council policies and procedures, or policies affecting students' success, the first place to seek clarification is with the principal of your school. Your School Planning Council might, from time to time, consider inviting members of senior administration and/or trustees to obtain specific information that might be relevant to your discussions. While senior administration and/or trustees have an open invitation to Council meetings, their regular attendance should not be expected.

4.3 Developing a Communication Plan

One of your Council's first tasks might be to develop a communication plan. To do so, you should consider the following:

- the audience with whom you need to communicate
- issues requiring broad school-community consultation
- the various communication strategies and processes that you can use
- individuals responsible for developing the plan timelines
- ways of dealing with feedback from the community
- the role that the Parent Advisory Council might play in carrying out the communication plan.

Throughout the year, there will be many opportunities for your school Council to assume a significant public profile in the school and in the school community, and it is important that you make the most of those events. Opportunities may take the form of:

- sending students home with a newsletter that could include the Council's meeting minutes;
- posting the Council's meeting minutes on the school's website;
- hosting special events that bring the school community into the school;
- making use of regular mailings, such as the mailing of report cards, to include a School Planning Council update, a list of the Council's activities for the year, or the school Council's meeting minutes;
- making personal contact with parents by phone or at special meetings.

In choosing communication strategies, your Council should consider their effectiveness and appropriateness for parents from diverse backgrounds and for the audiences within your community. For example, to assess the audience you wish to reach, you might begin by asking questions like the following:

- Who needs to know this? Which groups or communities need to be informed?
- With whom are we communicating already?
- Is the school reaching everyone it should?
- What organizations should we be reaching?

Next, you might decide exactly what you wish to communicate by asking questions such as the following:

- What does the audience need to know?
- What have we communicated up until now?
- Is the information we now wish to communicate appropriate for the audience?

Finally, you might determine how to deliver the messages you wish to communicate to your intended audience by asking questions such as the following:

- What is the best way and time to communicate?
- How are we currently exchanging information with the different groups in the school community?
- How can we assess the effectiveness of our current communication strategies?
- What communication efforts are working? Are not working?
- Are the messages designed to suit different audiences?
- Do we promote two-way communication?
- How will we know that the message has been received?

The public learns about schools through the following sources:

- local newspapers
- conversations with friends and neighbours
- radio, television, or the Internet
- school newsletters
- conversations with students
- service clubs and business associations
- personal friendships with educators in the district
- personal visits to schools

Your Council might want to consider including the following in your communication plan:

- any successful programs and practices that your school and parent group provide to involve families in their children's education
- ways of obtaining feedback from parents and staff on current practices that might be improved or on practices that are to be introduced
- specific strategies to involve families who do not participate in any of the programs provided
- ways of assessing the effectiveness of your Council's communication strategies and revising the communication plan for the following year

Communication Tips for Elementary Schools

Generally speaking, getting information home to parents in an elementary school community can be achieved fairly easily, as children in these grades are usually quite dutiful about bringing information home.

- Include information in the school's monthly calendar and in the school newsletter that goes home on a regular basis.
- Use space on the school's website to highlight activities and accomplishments of the Council and to promote parental involvement.
- Organize a telephone tree.
- If possible, and with permission, collect e-mail addresses from parents and set up distribution lists.
- Host information sessions.
- Always remember to accommodate working parents/guardians when setting up in-school meetings.
- Advertise in appropriate and effective locations or mediums.
- Make use of free public service announcements.

Communication Tips for Secondary Schools

Many of the strategies mentioned above also work for secondary schools, although high school students may not be as reliable as younger students in bringing information home. However, regular communication with the school community is as important for secondary schools as it is for elementary schools. If your School Planning Council wants to ensure good communication, it should think creatively about ways of disseminating information. For example, if your Council wants to get a newsletter home, find out when the principal is doing a mailing to the school community, and have a newsletter prepared for inclusion with the mailing. This incurs no extra cost, and it ensures that information is getting home to parents. Secondary School Planning Councils

may, however, wish to ensure that they can afford to send information home in the mail throughout the year, including notices of Council meetings and previous minutes.

4.4 Community Engagement

Community engagement is a whole-school activity. It must involve all staff members, students, and school Council members and should become a regular part of the school's business. The purpose of community engagement is to facilitate the continuous involvement of parents and community representatives in the school. Before determining which engagement strategies to use, you and other Council members might consider the activities in which you would like to involve parents and community members, as well as the activities in which these people might be interested.

Your school community will include a number of diverse groups: those who share common geographical, racial, ethnocultural, historic, religious, linguistic, or life backgrounds or experiences; others who share a particular challenge; and still others who share business, organizational, or institutional experiences. All these people and groups of people have something to contribute to the school, and to be successful, your Council should take advantage of the experience, knowledge, and skills of all of them.

It is expected that your Council will work closely with the school to establish and maintain strong communication links with these diverse groups and to encourage their involvement in both the School Planning Council and the school itself.

Here are a few suggestions to help make your Council's engagement strategies successful:

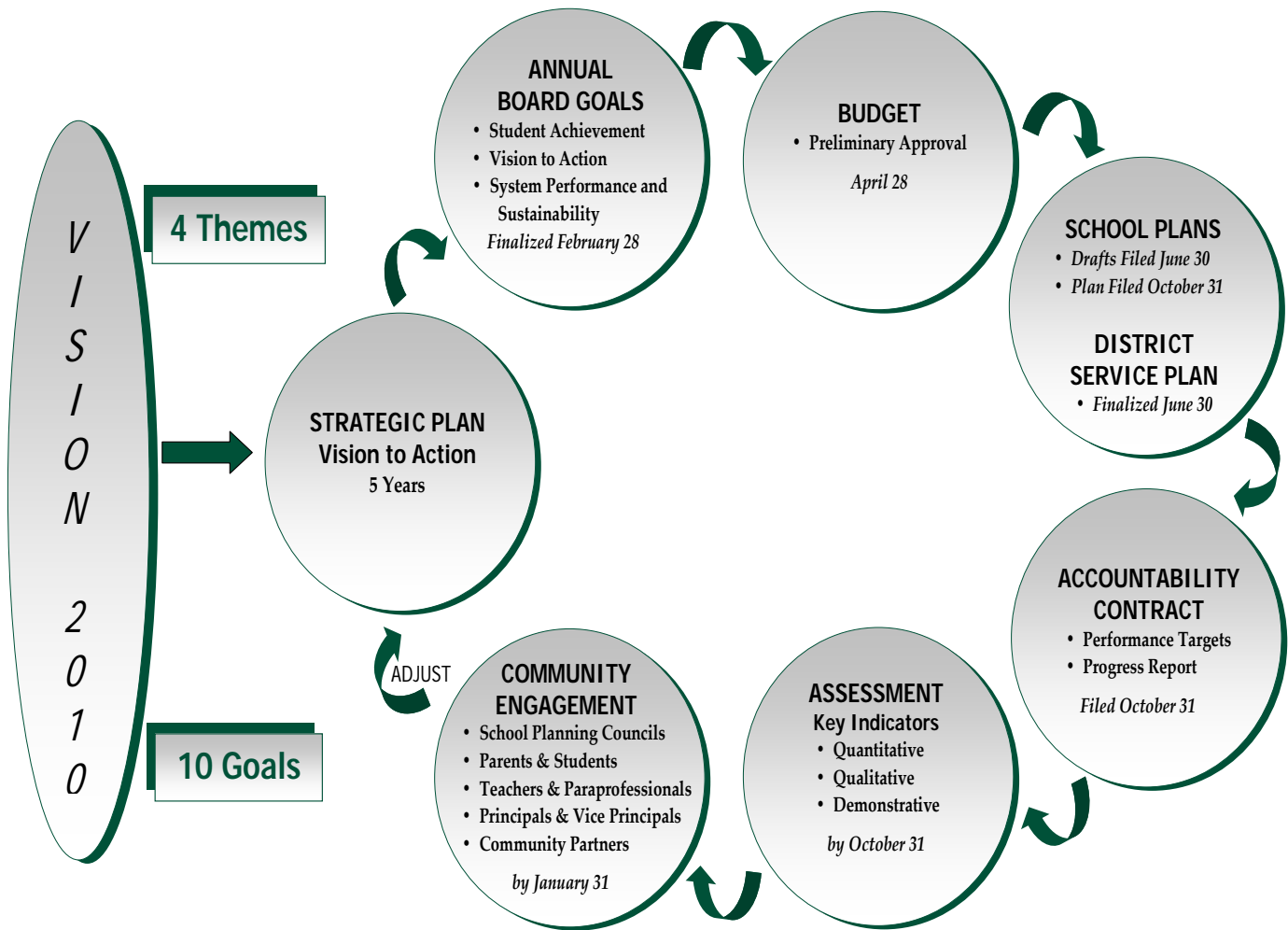
- Create an outreach committee, made up of members who represent the diverse groups within your community. Hold sessions with parents and other community representatives to brainstorm ideas for reaching others. Obtain specific information regarding outreach from everyone.
- Treat every parent and community representative with respect, trust, and courtesy.
- Make sure that there is a formal mechanism in place that lets parents and community representatives communicate what they want, need, like, and dislike throughout the year. Be sure to follow up on any concerns they raise.
- Offer information, workshops, and support for parents to help them learn more about what goes on in the school and how they can contribute to what their children are learning at school, both academically and socially. Include parents in pertinent planning sessions.
- Invite community leaders to school events.
- Use teachers, parents, and Council members to actively recruit other parents to become involved in the school.

THE PLANNING PROCESS – DISTRICT

5.1 District Planning Cycle

The Surrey School District has developed a planning process for developing its student achievement goals and planning for improvement, which begins with an analysis of student achievement, survey, and demographic data as well as an extensive series of community engagement activities. It concludes with the filing of the District’s Accountability Contract with the Ministry of Education. This cyclical process attempts to reconcile Ministry reporting deadlines, the release of achievement data by the Ministry of Education, the availability of district data, the calendar year, the school year, budget cycles, school planning process timelines, and student program planning. The process, entitled “Planning for Student Success” is outlined in the diagram provided below:

PLANNING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS



Results – Sources of Data

The district uses a variety of data to assist in school and district level planning and in making decisions about programs and services. These include, but are not limited to:

Achievement Data

- Provincial Examination and Scholarship Results
- Foundation Skills Assessment Results
- District Reading and Writing Assessment Results
- Application of the provincial performance standards for reading, writing, and social responsibility
- Report Card data
- School and classroom data
- Achievement Data connected to specific improvement initiatives
- Participation rates in various programs
- Graduation and transition rates

Survey Data

- Ministry Satisfaction Surveys
- District surveys (information technology, graduate, safe schools)
- Demographic Data

Community Engagement

The district organizes an extensive series of community engagement activities which include but are not limited to:

- Regional meetings with School Planning Council or Parent Advisory Council representatives
- Student forums
- Liaison meetings between the Board of School Trustees and representatives from the District Parent Advisory Council, student leaders, employee groups, community and cultural groups, the RCMP and the business community.

The main purpose of these activities is to seek advice on educational issues affecting Surrey students and to elicit responses to the data that is collected, analyzed, and presented.

Board Goals

Board Goals are established, affirmed, or changed annually following analysis of student achievement and survey data, and input resulting from various community engagement activities. The most current statement of the district's goals may be found on the District's web site.

Budget

The process for preparing the district budget concludes after goals have been established for the coming year. Resource allocations in support of the goals are considered during budget deliberation.

School Plans

The process for developing the school plan includes consideration of school, district, and Ministry data, and district goals for improving student achievement. The development of the school plan is given thorough treatment in section 5.2 of this manual.

Accountability Contract

The District's Accountability Contract incorporates District Goals and is reflective of the goals for improving student achievement identified in school plans. A more detailed description of the requirements for the Accountability Contract are provided in 7.2 and the district's most recent version of the Accountability Contract may be found on the District web site.

The Planning for Student Success Cycle is at least a three-year process that moves from data – to goal – to strategy – to implementation – and back to results.

5.2 Developing School Plans – Promising Practices

The development of the school plan provides an opportunity for the school community to establish, affirm, and adjust annual goals for student achievement. School Plans provide:

- A description of the context for the school (demographic information, unique characteristics)
- A maximum of three clear goals for improving student achievement
- A clearly understood data based rationale for the goals that were chosen
- Specific objectives supporting each goal
- Identification of the data that will be used to track progress
- Some reasonable performance targets
- A summary of results
- The strategies and structures to be used to achieve the goals

A full description of the contents of the school plan are provided in the template in appendix B, section 9.4

School plans are signed off by members of the School Planning Council and approved by the assistant superintendent on behalf of the School Board. A draft of the school plan is submitted by June 30 with the final version due by October 15.

Processes for Developing the School Plan

Support and Ownership for the goals for student achievement by the school community are integral to their attainment. To this end, school communities (teachers, parents, the school principal, and where applicable, students) need to be engaged in processes leading to their development. The processes that might be used to prepare the school plan and the student achievement goals contained therein are many and varied. They are closely linked to the school community's knowledge base, experiential background in setting short and long term goals as well as the kinds of working relationships that exist among parents and staff. What follows are descriptions of a number of promising practices that have been developed by our schools in establishing goals and completing the school plan. There are three elementary and two secondary school examples.

Bainbridge Elementary School

The need to develop positive and productive working relationships based on collaboration and interdependence was a key determinant in ensuring the successful development of a school plan at Bainbridge Elementary. The principal, new to the school, spent a considerable amount of time relationship building, visiting classrooms and talking with students about their learning; discussing student learning with staff members (both collectively and individually); meeting with the School Planning Council and Parent Advisory Council, and speaking informally with parents in the community. Importance was placed on keeping conversations about student learning alive, positive, child-centered and results / future-oriented. The principal focused on DuFour's key questions:

- What is it we want children to know?
- How do we know if they have learned it?
- What do we do if they don't?

Over time, the principal enlisted the support of key players who were receptive to the idea of developing a school plan that would best respond to the needs of Bainbridge students. They became a voluntary committee which was representative of the school community: a Primary teacher; an Intermediate teacher; 3 Learner Support Team teachers; the Librarian; the School Planning Council and the principal. The team met regularly and acted as a vehicle for collaborative goal-setting, problem-solving and decision making. They gathered

resources to help them in their work, including “The Handbook for Smart School Teams” by Conzemius and O’Neill. There was a belief that it was most important to keep school goals few in number, manageable and attainable. The focus became reading, and the school plan was formulated around five key areas:

- Early Intervention
- Sequential Instruction
- Staff and Professional Development
- Classroom-Based Assessment
- Partnerships: School, Community and Home

Clear, transparent communication with all parties was necessary. The committee took their rationale, ideas and proposals to the staff at monthly staff meetings where the necessary time was committed to thoroughly discuss them. This included opportunities to share best practice and analyze assessment results in order to identify areas of strength and need.

The litmus test was “Has what we have done improved student learning?” Time was provided at meetings to reflect on this question as a staff, draw reasoned conclusions; celebrate successes; consider the challenges and plan the next steps. It was agreed that the goal warranted more time in order to ‘dig deeper’ and sustain improvement. Therefore, with some adjustments, it logically carried over into the School Plan for the following year.

The Principal actively sought ways to involve the School Planning Council in the development and implementation of the School Plan. She met with the members to hear their views and opinions. They discussed student learning in Reading, studied the available data, identified discernable trends, and collectively came to an understanding of the needs of Bainbridge students. Working as an integral part of the School Plan committee, they helped form recommendations to take forward to the staff.

Along the way, it was necessary to invest time in developing their assessment literacy, particularly in the use of the Reading Performance Standards. This involved an examination of the assessment tools to be used and an explanation of the performance targets that were established.

As “partners in education”, the SPC recognized that they could be of greatest value in working with parents to inform them about the School Plan and reinforce their active participation in the achievement of the plan’s goals. They brainstormed ways in which they could assist their parent community to understand and support the School Plan (i.e. reporting out at every PAC meeting and providing information in newsletters).

Simon Fraser Elementary School

In its inaugural year (2002-2003) the School Planning Council was working with a School Improvement Plan that had been developed during the previous year. Therefore, goals for School Improvement had been established. Initially reluctant to assume the responsibility of developing school goals, the SPC articulated what they considered a desirable role within the school community:

1. To develop a thorough understanding of the School Plan and its implications for teaching and learning
2. To assist the parent community to understand the School Plan
3. To advance the goals for the School Plan by enlisting the assistance of the parent community

To these ends, they undertook to survey the parents in order to better assess the parents’ understanding of the goals and identify areas where parent inservice would improve parental support for the goals. The results of that survey were instrumental in setting the agenda for a series of parent evenings focused on Social Responsibility and Reading during the school year.

During that year there was also opportunity to engage the SPC in a careful analysis of the data-gathering and decision-making processes, in essence to develop their assessment literacy.

To better understand the data-gathering process, the SPC engaged in a systematic review of the assessment tools being employed for each goal, particularly the Performance Standards, guided in their analysis by the following questions:

1. What area of student learning does the assessment tool examine?
2. How does the assessment tool distinguish the learning achievement of different students?
3. Where would we expect to see evidence of significant learning, using the assessment tool?
4. How effective is the assessment tool in providing reliable data on student learning?

As their appreciation of the nature and role of effective assessment grew, the SPC was better able to work in conjunction with the two staff planning committees assigned to the school goals of Reading and Social Responsibility. The Reading Committee worked with whole school reading assessments done at each grade level in each of the three school terms, and FSA results in reading. The Social Responsibility committee explored the results of two assessments done using the Social Responsibility Performance Standards, once in September, and on a second occasion in May, as well as Satisfaction Surveys completed in the Spring.

The data analysis undertaken was guided by basic questions that directed the committees to consider specific features of the data:

1. What discernible trends are evident in the data?
2. Do these trends reflect student learning or are they evidence of challenges inherent in the assessment tool?
3. Are results consistent across all grades or are there “pockets” of greatest or least impact?
4. Is the data manageable as a whole or do we need to focus attention on specific elements of the assessments to draw significant conclusions?
5. If comparing results from different assessment tools, do we see parallel results or are the results discrepant?

As the two staff planning committees worked through the data and arrived at conclusions based on the data-analysis, those findings were shared with the SPC. In addition, the planning committees presented various recommendations on how the school goals would be framed both to reflect changes in student performance in the previous year and emerging commitments to where instructional attention could be best focused. It was this analysis and the resulting recommendations that formed the primary components of the School Plan.

When the new SPC for the following school year was elected, once again we went through a systematic examination of the assessment tools to be used and an explanation of the performance targets established. As in previous years, the SPC renewed its commitment to working directly with parents to gain their active participation in the achievement of the goals. They are currently developing a program to engage both parents and students in a series of school activities to reinforce learning goals and define parental roles as partners in the educational enterprise.

Kelsey Elementary School

The Kelsey Elementary staff and School Planning Council view the development and revision of the school plan as an on-going process. Over the past three years, data had clearly shown that many of the primary students required focused intervention to enhance early literacy skills. As well, the data indicated that Kelsey’s intermediate students also needed to improve in the development of reading skills. For these reasons, the improvement of student learning in reading has continued to remain as the focus of our School Plan.

Over the past few years, our planning and implementation process has evolved, and now includes the following activities:

- Student achievement data is collected during the Fall and the Spring of each school year;
- Staff use one staff development day in October, February and June to review current data, collaboratively plan instructional interventions, and plan for upcoming assessments.

-
- Monthly meetings by the school Literacy Committee focus on informal dialogue around research, new instructional strategies and assessment and evaluation strategies. Key items for discussion with staff are brought to monthly Primary and Intermediate meetings.
 - The School Planning Council meets at least 4 times each year to review the current data and instructional interventions outlined in the School Plan. New instructional interventions planned by Staff are shared with the SPC and feedback is sought and considered.
 - In addition to the indicated meetings, The School Planning Council holds two parent focus group meetings each year. These focus groups allow groups of randomly selected parents to discuss the content of the school plan and provide input that is made available to both the School Planning Council and the Staff.
 - School plan updates are reported to parents at regular PAC meetings and in school newsletters.

Central Secondary School

Central Secondary is a large comprehensive high school serving a demographically diverse student population. The School Planning Council meets monthly, prior to the Parent Advisory Council meeting. Both meetings usually provide opportunities to review student achievement data, and various school improvement initiatives.

Each year, in the spring, the School Planning Council hosts a dinner meeting and invites student representatives, and interested teaching and support staff, to review elements of the school plan.

Department Heads play a key leadership role in establishing school goals. They had received summer inservice on developing collaborative teams and preparing SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) goals. Departments are asked to submit annual department plans using an adapted district template for preparing school plans. Departments use a collaboratively developed reflection guide based on the 10 points of inquiry to promote the involvement and participation of department members. These are a major focus at monthly department and department head meetings. This year the submission of Department Plans had been postponed until all ten questions in the Reflection Guide had been discussed. The intent was to generate sustained discussion within each department related to why schools exist and what we believe our purpose is in serving students. The sustained discussion is intended to create collaboratively developed shared goals that link departments and connect to school-wide goals which are incorporated into the school plan. The achievement targets stated in the School Plan are negotiated/verified by Department Heads.

The School Plan and relevant data is presented and reviewed regularly at Staff Meetings, Department Head Meetings, with the Parent Advisory Council, School Planning Council, and at least annually with Student Councils. Interdisciplinary teams meet monthly or bi-monthly to review data and monitor school goal implementation strategies.

Hampstead Secondary School

Hampstead Secondary is also a large comprehensive high school serving an ethnically diverse student population. A well established committee structure is in place to develop and shepherd the School Plan.

The School Planning Council has had a group of highly supportive parents that have served for several years. This has helped them acquire a deeper understanding of assessment and the role it plays in the teaching learning process. The School Planning Council:

- holds regular monthly meetings scheduled the same night as the PAC meeting
- uses as a guide “12 Things To Do With Your New SPC”
- regularly reviews data such as Provincial Exam Results, Marks Analysis, Satisfaction Survey Results, and School Examination Trends
- varies their agenda to include staff presentations and review of District and Ministry
- includes two student members

Staff involvement and ownership was secured by having

-
- a committee of staff take responsibility for each of the two school goals (6 members on the Reading committee, 7 on the Social Responsibility committee)
 - the committees successfully extend the involvement to include many other staff in implementing the various strategies that support the two goals.

Leadership Capacity was expanded by having

- many staff take a leadership role within their department (reading) or within a grade level (Grade 9 Service Learning Contract)
- committee members present to staff at staff meetings, department head meetings and Professional Development days
- committee members present to School Planning Council, Parent Advisory Council, District Review Team, and school district management

School Plan momentum was sustained by

- ensuring that some aspect of the plan was an agenda item for all meetings (i.e.: staff, department head, Parent Advisory Council, School Planning Council)
- regularly reviewing progress in implementing interventions and strategies
- including some aspect of the topic in each newsletter to parents
- addressing the goals at student assemblies
- working elements of the plan into Professional Development days
- finding ways to release staff during the working day to design and implement strategies to accomplish the goals.

The goals were embedded in the regular curriculum. For example:

- Each junior grade developed a project to teach social responsibility. In Grade 8 students learn the language of social responsibility and attain the concept that everyone can be a leader. In Grade 9 they complete a “service learning contract”. In Grade 10 they further develop the concept of social responsibility as it relates to the world of work.
- The school’s reading goal is being implemented across the curriculum. For example students in science are being taught reading strategies that are most effective for that subject area. The students see reading as a skill that is needed in all subject areas.

ASSESSING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

6.1 Student Assessment and Evaluation

Student assessment and evaluation is an integral part of the learning partnership that exists among teachers, students, and parents/guardians. Teachers gather information and data on student achievement (assessment) on a regular and frequent basis and then make judgments about student growth (evaluation) to:

- gain information about future instructional needs.
- gather information on student progress to report to parents/guardians.
- make students aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

Student assessment includes teacher-designed quizzes and tests, projects, assignments, observations, and portfolios of student work as well as standardized tests and provincial and district assessments.

The results of assessment/evaluation are used to:

- determine the achievement in one learning sequence and the readiness for the next.
- give students the feedback necessary to make study plans.
- improve instructional strategies.
- test student knowledge acquisition and concept attainment

Classroom assessments should allow students to represent learning in a variety of ways and provide fair, valid, and reliable information promote learning and help students succeed.

Kinds of Assessment

Assessment can serve a multitude of purposes and can be intended for different audiences. Results can be used to help make decisions about teaching and learning and or about programs and services offered by schools and districts. Current thinking about assessment identifies three general approaches or categories which would include assessment OF learning, assessment FOR learning, and assessment AS learning. These approaches might be described as follows:

Assessment OF learning:

What learning has taken place at a particular point in time?

When students are demonstrating what they know at the end of a unit or a term, or in a more formalized test, this is a summary of their learning at that particular time. The most relevant assessments for classroom practice are those designed to match curriculum content. These assessments are evaluative, and are a snapshot of learning at a given point in time.

Assessment FOR learning:

How can assessment be used to inform instruction and enhance student learning?

When students are assessed in an ongoing way, as part of regular or specifically designed techniques that teachers employ (such as conversations, observations, and collecting products) it is possible to discover what they understand to date, and where to take the learning from that point. These assessments are descriptive and give information to teachers and students about areas of strength, and those that need further development.

Assessment AS learning:

How can assessment be understood and internalized by students to think about and refine their learning?

When students understand and use criteria independently, they are learning how to think about their own thinking and learning. Thinking about thinking is called metacognition. These assessments are descriptive and have students using well developed criteria and descriptions to identify own areas of strength, and those that need further development.

The following table provides some examples of the three kinds of assessments. It is noted that some assessments can serve several purposes and would therefore fall into more than one category:

Assessment OF	Assessment FOR	Assessment AS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Standards (late spring) (rubrics are evaluative) • Foundation Skills Assessment (gr. 4 & 7) • Provincial Examinations • <u>Standardized tests</u> (although as a measure OF learning consider BC curriculum match or mismatch (i.e., is it exemplary for our students' actual learning of curriculum?), e.g., • CTBS (Canadian Test of Basic Skills) (K-7) • CAT (Canadian Achievement Test) <p><u>Classroom developed examples:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance assessments • Quizzes, tests <p><u>District Assessment:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELPATS • RAD36 • Social Responsibility Performance Standards • Leadership Performance Standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Standards (ongoing throughout year) (rubrics are descriptive) • Criteria development informs student work <p><u>Leveled Kits:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRA Kit (K-3; 4-8) (Pearson) • P.M. Benchmark Kit (1-6)* (Nelson) • Alphakids Kit, (levels 1-24) (Scholastic), Early Primary <p><u>Informal Reading Inventories:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberta Diagnostic Reading Program (1-6) • Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory (K-7) <p><u>Classroom developed examples:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • running records • work samples • student portfolio • reading conferences • anecdotal notes • listening to readers • reader response logs • text representation <p><u>District Assessment:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELPATS • RAD36 • Social Responsibility Performance Standards • Leadership Performance Standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Standards (students using) (RUBRICS ARE DESCRIPTIVE) • Criteria development is collaborative, internalized, and students are metacognitive <p><u>Classroom examples:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student portfolio • reading (e.g., conference with teacher) when students purposefully use internalized strategies)

Additional information about Assessment OF/FOR/AS Learning may be found in Section 8.0 of the appendix.

6.2 Sources of Data

School Planning Councils should consider data from a variety of sources as the annual school plan is developed. This can extend beyond assessments to include survey data and a variety of demographic information. This section provides a listing of the data that is readily available.

Ministry of Education

(Available from the Ministry of Education web site)

- Provincial Examination Results, Trends, Participation Rates
- Provincial Scholarships
- Foundation Skills Assessments (grades 4 & 7)
- Aboriginal Student Performance
- Parent, Student, and Staff Satisfaction Survey Results
- Graduation and Transition Rates
- Grade Point Average Data for Graduates
- Graduation with Honours Data
- School Demographic Profiles

Surrey School District

- Grade 7 & 9 Writing Assessment Results
- Elementary and Secondary Marks Analysis Information
- Phonemic Awareness Assessment Results
- District Reading Assessment Results (RAD36)
- Social Responsibility Assessment Results (under development)
- Safe Schools Survey Results (every two years)
- Graduating Student Survey results (every two years)
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Survey
- Other data pertaining to specific district improving student achievement initiatives

Schools

Each Elementary and Secondary School may have developed their own strategies for obtaining data that is specifically connected to school-based initiatives.

Commonly Used Measures

Tables identifying some of the measures that are commonly used in British Columbia and describing how they might be used in school planning may be found in Appendix 8.9.

Other Data Sources

The Early Development Indicators (EDI) Project provides school districts and communities with information about their preschool population. The mapping project helps

- 1) measure readiness to learn in children;
- 2) assess effectiveness of early childhood intervention; and
- 3) predict how children will do in elementary school.

The data can be accessed at www.earlylearning.ubc.ca

6.3 Interpreting Foundation Skills Assessment Results

The Foundation Skills Assessment consists of tests for Reading Comprehension, Writing and Numeracy, which are developed by the Ministry of Education and given to all students in grades 4 and 7 each spring. Results are reported for school districts and individual schools and individual student results are available to parents in the fall.

For district and school results, reports indicate the percentage of students whose scores on each test “exceed expectations”, “meet expectations” and are “not yet within expectations.” Summary results commonly show

the percent of students who “meet or exceed expectations” and are accompanied by an indication of the error in the scores.

Errors of Measurement

Errors of measurement in testing reflect known error components and dictate the magnitude of difference between scores necessary for statistical significance. This concept is critical for comparisons (district with the province; schools with the district; one school from year to year; schools with each other).

- without statistical significance, there is no ground for interpreting that there is a difference between scores regardless of the magnitude of that difference
- with a statistically significant difference, a judgment call may be made on whether or not this constitutes a meaningful (educationally significant) difference

The magnitude of the error is dependent on the number of students tested and the range of scores of the group. In general, smaller numbers of students result in larger errors. Error values are illustrated as $\pm x\%$ in Results Reports from the Ministry. These values are used to create a range (confidence interval) around the value reported.

$$\text{e.g. } 72 \pm 1\% = 71\% - 73\%$$

The technical interpretation is that, knowing that measurement is an imperfect science and subject to error, we can be 90% sure that the “real” or “true” percentage falls within the range of 71% to 73%.

Error ranges: Province:	$\pm 0\%$
District:	$\pm 1\%$
Individual Schools (Surrey):	$\pm 2\%$ to $\pm 15\%$

In order to assess significant differences between scores, you must ensure that the confidence intervals do not overlap with each other. Some are illustrated graphically in reports from the Ministry.

A significant difference between two scores (percentage of students meeting or exceeding expectations) must be at least the magnitude of the sum of the error components of the two scores.

- comparisons between the Surrey School District ($\pm 1\%$) and the province ($\pm 0\%$) require only 1% difference
- comparisons within the district from one year ($\pm 1\%$) to the next ($\pm 1\%$) require a 2% difference
- comparisons between a school and the district need 1% for the district plus $x\%$ for the school
- comparisons between schools need the sum of the $\pm\%$ ages reported for each school. In some cases, this can be very large.
- comparisons within a school from one year to the next need the sum of the $\pm\%$ ages for the two years. These, too, can be very large depending on the school.

Several cautions are in order when interpreting Foundation Skills Assessment results.

- Be cautious with comparisons between a school and the district.
- Be very careful with comparisons between schools.
- Be extremely careful in looking for “growth/change” evidence in a single school over time, especially if the school is small and/or the errors of measurement are large.
- Note that errors are not presented for individual students, but can be assured to be very large. It is for this reason that some are reported as spanning two categories.

6.4 Guidelines for Using Ministry Satisfaction Surveys

The Ministry of Education has developed annual surveys for students, parents and school staffs and administers them each spring. The targeted groups are students and their parents in grades 4, 7, 10 and 12 throughout the province as well as the staffs in schools enrolling these grades. Questions are similar to those asked in previous accreditation surveys and are focused around six topics: student achievement, human and social development, school environment, safety, computers, and physical activity.

School reports include four kinds of information, all based on percent of persons responding to the surveys:

- participation levels
- overall satisfaction (aggregation of results for the entire survey)
- satisfaction by category (summary of responses for questions specifically relating to each of 6 topics: achievement, human & social development, school environment, safety, computers and physical activity)
- responses to individual questions

Information for Interpretation

Small Numbers

Small numbers yield data that is unstable. Data is not generally held to be reliable for fewer than 20 participants, especially when it is collected from different cohorts from one year to the next.

The use of percentages is misleading with small numbers. It is best to translate into actual numbers and report, for example, 9 of 12 students rather than 75% of students.

Participation Levels

A high participation rate does not compensate for a small group size (100% of 8 people is still only 8 people).

Low participation rates yield data that are not considered to be representative of the whole group. Statistical tables indicate that a 50% participation rate is needed when the reference group size is about 400 (the percentage increases as group size decreases). This is a high standard to meet in many cases. It is recommended that you look for at least one-third (33%) participation remembering that the final count should be greater than 20 persons.

Consider participation levels first and then satisfaction ratings. A participation level of 17% of staff and an overall satisfaction of 93% means that only 17% of staff reported strong satisfaction. Small numbers reporting high satisfaction may not be your goal.

Overall Satisfaction and Satisfaction Levels by Category

Note that the Ministry's definition of "satisfaction" is based on the sum of respondents who select "all of the time" plus those who select "many times".

Question Responses

The report shows the percent of respondents who chose each of the response options for each question. It is recommended that you use the combination "all of the time" plus "many times" as your measure of satisfaction. This is consistent with Ministry usage and increases your numbers, thus increasing reliability.

Comparison with the District Secondary Safe Schools Survey Results

In our district report, we summed over three response categories in keeping with practice on earlier surveys. As a result, if you are comparing satisfaction survey results to the district safe schools survey, you need to sum percentages of responses: "sometimes" + "many times" + "all of the time" for the question about feeling safe at school.

Steps to Realistic Goal Setting

-
1. Turn participation rates into actual numbers in small schools and note that variations from year to year would be expected on the basis of size alone. Look for trends over three years rather than setting a goal for a specific gain in one year.
 2. Where participation rates are low, consider a goal of increasing participation before establishing goals to increase satisfaction based on non-representative numbers of respondents.
 3. Although it is not mentioned in the Ministry report, awareness of measurement error tells us that goals to achieve small gains may be frustrating at the individual school level (error causes the results to fluctuate in either direction). Again, it is recommended to look at trends over about 3 years rather than seek specific percentages.
 4. Use of overall satisfaction or satisfaction levels by category increases stability (reliability) since the data is based on more information. While specific questions may be of interest, goals based on the aggregated data (combinations of questions) are recommended.
 5. Seek to augment evidence of gains by using more than one source (e.g., actual course marks, parent participation in school events, actual measures of social responsibility, etc.).

Quick Summary

- Data based on small numbers or on a small percentage (even if this is a large number of persons) require cautious interpretation.
- Setting a goal for increased participation is highly defensible. Increased satisfaction should be a second step.
- Focus on trends over time rather than a specific increase in one year.
- If you have high percentages of satisfaction, consider a goal of maintaining rather than increasing.
- Satisfaction Survey results constitutes only one piece of evidence. Avoid over emphasizing their importance.

6.5 BC Performance Standards

The BC Performance Standards have been developed for voluntary use in BC schools. They describe the professional judgments of a significant number of BC educators about standards and expectations for the following key areas of learning:

- reading
- writing
- numeracy
- social responsibility

The standards focus exclusively on performance assessment. In performance assessment students are asked to apply the skills and concepts they have learned to complete complex, realistic tasks. This type of assessment supports a criterion-referenced approach to evaluation and enables teachers, students, and parents to compare student performance to provincial standards.

The BC Performance Standards are intended as a resource to support ongoing instruction and assessment. Teachers can use these standards to:

- monitor, evaluate, and report on individual student performance
- identify students who may benefit from intervention
- develop a profile of a class or group of students to support instructional decision-making
- prompt discussions with parents, students, and other teachers about student performance
- inform professional development activities
- collaboratively set goals for individuals, classes, or schools
- provide models for designing performance tasks
- develop evidence for school plans

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes describe what students are supposed to learn in each subject and at each grade level. Learning outcomes are often called content standards. Content standards answer the question: "What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are students expected to develop at this grade level?"

The ministry's Integrated Resource Packages list prescribed learning outcomes for BC provincial curricula for each subject and grade level.

Performance Standards

Performance standards describe levels of achievement in key areas of learning. Performance standards answer the questions: "How good is good enough? What does it look like when a student's work has met the expectations at this grade level?"

The BC Performance Standards describe and illustrate the following four levels of student performance in terms of prescribed learning outcomes relevant to the key areas of reading, writing, numeracy and social responsibility.

NOT YET WITHIN EXPECTATIONS

- The work does not meet grade-level expectations.
- There is little evidence of progress toward the relevant prescribed learning outcomes.
- The situation needs intervention.

MEETS EXPECTATIONS (MINIMAL LEVEL)

- The work may be inconsistent, but meets grade-level expectations at a minimal level.
- There is evidence of progress toward relevant prescribed learning outcomes.
- The student needs support in some areas.

FULLY MEETS EXPECTATIONS

- The work meets grade-level expectations.
- There is evidence that relevant prescribed learning outcomes have been accomplished.

EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

- The work exceeds grade-level expectations in significant ways.
- The student may benefit from extra challenges.

Using the Standards

Teachers use a variety of methods to gather the information they need to assess, evaluate, and report on student learning. Possible methods include classroom and standardized tests, observations, student work portfolios, conferences, self- and peer assessment, and performance tasks.

The BC Performance Standards give teachers a way to assess students' abilities to apply their learning in realistic performance tasks in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy and social responsibility. Used with other methods, they can be an important part of a comprehensive assessment and evaluation system. The standards:

- should be used within the context of ongoing classroom instruction. They are meant to be curriculum-embedded—used as part of regular classroom learning activities.
- provide resources for assessing and evaluating the quality of a specific piece or a collection of student work from various subject areas. They can help to develop a profile of student achievement, typically based on three to seven pieces of work.
- assume that in most cases teachers are observing students as they work. Often, some of the evidence needed to make decisions about a student's work comes from observations and conversations with students.
- allow for teachers to intervene where students are unable to complete a task independently. The level of assistance required is often one of the criteria for determining whether or not a student's work falls within grade-level expectations.
- may be adapted as needed. This might mean creating scales for grades not included in the standards, developing IEPs or other tailored evaluation, or adjusting expectations for different times of the year.

Supporting Learning

The BC Performance Standards are intended to support instructional decision-making. Teachers would consider the following questions as they plan instruction:

- How do these standards match my/our expectations for students at this level?
- What kinds of instructional strategies and learning opportunities will help most students develop the skills they need to meet these performance expectations?
- What additional support and interventions will be needed to help all students meet these expectations?
- If there are some students for whom these expectations are not appropriate, what expectations should they meet?
- What evidence do I/we need to collect to find out if students are making progress towards the expectations?

The BC Performance Standards can be readily accessed on the Ministry of Education web site at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/perf_stands/

DISTRICT REVIEW PROCESS – MINISTRY

7.1 Ministry of Education Accountability Framework

Principles for District and School Planning

1. The intent of the accountability framework is to focus school and district attention and resources on improving student achievement.
2. Student achievement includes intellectual, human and social, and career development. It is about ALL achievements and the achievements of ALL.
3. School and district leaders need to be knowledgeable about assessment practices and the use of assessment data to plan for instruction. Teams of teachers use assessment data to plan and modify instruction.
4. School and district plans reflect the characteristics, values, and needs of the community they serve.
5. Superintendents and principals ensure plans are in place to improve the performance of the full range of students.
6. School and district improvement plans are based on multiple data sources including classroom based, school, district, and provincial measures.
7. The School Planning Council at each school is responsible for preparing and submitting to the Board an annual plan for improving student achievement.
8. Guidelines for Accountability Contracts and school plans provide a degree of consistency – not conformity. Guidelines are enabling rather than prescriptive.
9. A clear focus in a few key areas promotes commitment and more effective use of resources.
10. Everyone has a responsibility for improving schools.

7.2 District Accountability Contract

The focus of district Accountability Contracts is on improving student achievement in key areas. A Board must prepare an Accountability Contract annually.

This must be submitted on or before October 31 to the Minister of Education.

Each district Accountability Contract must be available to residents of the district and to parents of students attending schools in the district.

The district Accountability Contract reflects the characteristics, values, and needs of the community.

Districts consider school, district, and provincial level data in the development of their plans.

Districts determine how individual schools are performing and how specific groups of students are performing.

Districts develop strategies to improve the achievement of the lowest performing schools and groups of students.

For the purposes of data collection, identification of promising strategies and shared themes, the Ministry specifies what is to be included in district Accountability Contracts. Districts may add to the information requested if so desired.

District Accountability Contracts are to include:

- A description of the context of the district – its unique characteristics, strengths, and challenges.
- Clearly stated goals for improving student achievement.
- A data based rationale for the selection of each goal.
- An identification of specific targets for improvement - both annual and long term.
- A summary of the progress made in the previous year(s) in moving toward the desired target and the data sources used to determine the progress.
- A description of:
 - the way in which the district is making the connection with school plans.
 - the strategies the district is using to support lower achieving schools in the district.
 - the efforts the district is making to raise the performance of identified groups of students.

7.3 District Review

District Reviews are part of the Ministry of Education’s new Accountability Framework and the Ministry’s public accountability for student results and will provide districts with recommendations for further improvement.

The purpose of the District Review is to provide feedback and recommendations to the district, the Ministry of Education and the public regarding the district’s work in improving student achievement by:

- Reviewing district and school achievement data;
- Reviewing the district Accountability Contracts and school plans to improve student achievement;
- Making recommendations to the Board and to the Minister about improving student achievement; and
- Identifying promising practices that will assist other districts and schools in their efforts to improve student achievement.

The review team will provide a report to the School Board and to the Ministry. The report will include observations and recommendations and will be available to the public.

Up to 20 districts will be reviewed annually.

District Review Reports are available on the Ministry website.

7.4 District/School Review Guidelines

The following key areas for inquiry, the suggested questions and draft scoring guide are to provide a framework for the review team to use in discussions with district leaders and school teams. The full set of Guidelines can be found in the Appendix (8.7).

1. Setting Directions: Goals and Objectives

Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals and objectives for improving achievement for all students.

2. Setting Directions: Rationale

Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals and objectives.

3. Setting Directions: Data (Evidence)

Improving districts and schools are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school, district and provincial data. The analysis of this evidence informs the selection of district goals and objectives and is used to monitor progress.

4. Organizing for Improvement: Strategies

Improving districts and schools have focused, well organized improvement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals and objectives are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.

5. Organizing for Improvement: Structures

Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organization – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.

6. Organizing for Improvement: Coherence/Alignment

In improving districts, there is a connection between school and district goals and objectives. School uniqueness and district directions are both valued. Schools connect with other schools to build capacity.

7. Building Learning Communities: Dialogue and Communication

Improving districts and schools maintain relationships that promote continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.

8. Building Learning Communities: Parent Involvement

Improving districts and schools work with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.

9. Building Learning Communities: Leadership

Leaders in improving districts and schools have a clear vision for, and commitment to improving achievement for all students. Leadership at all levels, in all roles, is encouraged and systematically developed in a collaborative learning community with a focus on improving student achievement.

10. Achieving Results

Improving districts and schools improve results. They monitor and make adjustments in key areas of student achievement – in classrooms, schools and the district.

APPENDIX A

8.1 School Act Regulations re School Planning Councils

Division 2—Parents

Parents' entitlements and responsibilities

- 7 (1) A parent of a student of school age attending a school is entitled
- to be informed, in accordance with the orders of the minister, of the student's attendance, behavior and progress in school,
 - on request, to the school plan for the school and the accountability contract for the school district, and
 - to belong to a parents' advisory council established under section 8.
- (2) A parent of a student of school age attending a school may, and at the request of a teacher, principal, vice principal or director of instruction must, consult with the teacher, principal, vice principal or director of instruction with respect to the student's educational program.

Parent volunteers

- 7.1 Subject to this Act, the regulations and any rules of a board, a parent of a student may provide volunteer services at or for a school.

Parents' advisory council

- 8 (1) Parents of students of school age attending a school or a Provincial school may apply to the board or to the minister, as the case may be, to establish a parents' advisory council for that school.
- (2) On receipt of an application under subsection (1), the board or minister must establish a parents' advisory council for the school or the Provincial school.
- (3) There must be only one parents' advisory council for each school or Provincial school.
- (4) A parents' advisory council, through its elected officers, may (a) advise the board and the principal and staff of the school or the Provincial school respecting any matter relating to the school or the Provincial school, other than matters assigned to the school planning council, and (b) at the request of the school planning council, assist the school planning council in carrying out its functions under this Act.
- (5) A parents' advisory council, in consultation with the principal, must make bylaws governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs, including bylaws governing (a) the dissolution of the parents' advisory council, (b) the election of members to represent the parents' advisory council on the school planning council, and (c) the election of a member to represent the parents' advisory council on the district parents' advisory council.
- (6) Voting at an election referred to in subsection (5) (b) and (c) must be by secret ballot.

School planning council

- 8.1 (1) A board must establish a school planning council for each school, except a Provincial resource program, in its school district
- (2) At the request of 3 parents of students attending a Provincial resource program, a board may establish a school planning council for the Provincial resource program.
- (3) A school planning council for a school consists of the following persons:
- the principal of the school;
 - one of the teachers at the school, elected annually by secret ballot by the teachers who teach at the school;

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- (c) 3 representatives of the parents' advisory council who are
 - (i) parents of students enrolled in the school, and
 - (ii) elected annually by the parents' advisory council.
 - (4) One of the representatives elected under subsection (3) (c) must be an elected officer of the parents' advisory council.
 - (5) A board may appoint a person to fill a vacancy on a school planning council if
 - (a) there is no parents' advisory council for the school,
 - (b) the parents' advisory council for the school does not elect 3 representatives under subsection (3) (c), or
 - (c) the teachers at the school do not elect a representative under subsection (3) (b).
 - (6) The term of office of a person appointed or elected under this section to the school planning council must not be more than one year.
 - (7) An employee of any board is not eligible for election under subsection (3) (c) or an appointment in the circumstances referred to in subsection (5) (a) or (b).

Role of a school planning council

- 8.2** (1) A board must consult with a school planning council in respect of the following:
- (a) the allocation of staff and resources in the school;
 - (b) matters contained in the board's accountability contract relating to the school;
 - (c) educational services and educational programs in the school.

School plan

- 8.3** (1) In each school year, a board must approve a school plan for every school in the school district.
- (2) By a date set by the board, a school planning council must prepare and submit to the board a school plan for the school in respect of improving student achievement and other matters contained in the board's accountability contract relating to that school.
- (3) A school planning council must consult with the parents' advisory council during the preparation of the school plan.
- (4) The board may approve, approve with modifications or reject a school plan submitted under subsection (2) or (6).
- (5) Before approving a school plan, the board may
- (a) consult with the school planning council about modifications to the school plan, or
 - (b) direct the school planning council to modify all or part of the school plan by a specified date.
- (6) The board may direct the principal of a school to prepare and submit to the board a school plan for the school by a specified date if
- (a) the school planning council does not submit a school plan under subsection (2),
 - (b) the school planning council does not comply with a direction of the board under subsection (5) (b), or
 - (c) the board rejects the school plan submitted under subsection (2).
- (7) A board must make a school plan approved under subsection (4) available to the parents of students attending that school.

District parents' advisory council

- 8.4** (1) A parents' advisory council, through its elected officers, may apply to the board for the establishment of a district parents' advisory council.
- (2) On receipt of an application under subsection (1), the board must establish a district parents' advisory council for the school district consisting of representatives elected to the council under subsection (3).

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- (3) Each parents' advisory council in a school district may elect annually one of its members to be its representative on the district parents' advisory council for a term of not more than one year.
 - (4) There must be only one district parents' advisory council for each school district.

Purpose and operation of district parents' advisory council

- 8.5**
- (1) Subject to section 67 (5.1), the district parents' advisory council may advise the board on any matter relating to education in the school district.
 - (2) A district parents' advisory council must make bylaws governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs, including bylaws governing the dissolution of the council.
 - (3) A superintendent of schools for the school district, a designate of the superintendent or a trustee of the school district may attend any meeting of the district parents' advisory council.

Accountability contracts

- 79.2**
- (1) A board must prepare an accountability contract with respect to improving student achievement in the school district and any other matters ordered by the minister.
 - (2) On or before October 31 of each year, a board must submit its accountability contract for the school year to the minister and must make its accountability contract available to residents of the school district and to parents of students attending schools in the district.

Source: BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils 2002

8.2 School District Policy and Regulations re School Planning Councils

POLICY: SCHOOL PLANNING COUNCILS

NO. 10370

The Board supports the establishment of School Planning Councils for the purposes set out in the *School Act*.

The Board is committed to assisting parents, staff, and principals in establishing effective, positive and productive School Planning Councils in every school. It views the Councils as having an important role to play in planning for school improvement.

The Board recognizes its responsibility to ensure that School Planning Councils:

- (a) function effectively in accordance with the *School Act*,
- (b) operate in a manner which reflects high ethical standards, and
- (c) represent the school community in the process of school planning.

The policy is supported by regulations outlining the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved. These will be reviewed and updated whenever necessary to meet the intent of the policy.

Adopted: 2003-04-10

1.0 PURPOSE AND ROLE OF SCHOOL PLANNING COUNCILS

- 1.1 The role of a School Planning Council is:
- (a) Provision of input to and approval of a proposed school plan;
 - (b) Consultation on matters referred to it by the Board, the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designate;
 - (c) Consultation on matters pertaining to student achievement referred to it by the Principal, the teaching staff, or by the Parent Advisory Council.
- 1.2 A Board must consult with a School Planning Council in respect of the following:
- (a) The allocation of staff and resources in the school;
 - (b) Matters contained in the Board's accountability contract relative to the school;
 - (c) Educational services and education programs in the school.
- 1.3 For the purposes of consultation on matters outlined in 1.2, the Principal will act on behalf of the Board.
- 1.4 The following are not within the mandate of the School Planning Council:
- (a) Personnel matters;
 - (b) Personal and confidential information about students, parents, teachers and other employees;
 - (c) Performance or conduct of individual students, parents, and employees;
 - (d) Terms and conditions of collective agreements and/or individual employment contracts;
 - (e) Activities beyond the advisory and consultative roles set out in the *School Act* and this policy.

2.0 SUPPORT

- 2.1 The Superintendent shall designate the Assistant Superintendent for each geographic area to act as district liaison for School Planning Councils. The role of the district liaison is to provide advice and support regarding process issues, dispute resolution and other matters surrounding the operation of the School Planning Council and the development of the school plan. The district liaison will have the right to attend any meeting of a School Planning Council and may designate another board officer or employee to attend in his or her place.

3.0 ESTABLISHMENT

- 3.1 If no School Planning Council is in place in a school that is not a provincial resource program, the Principal shall proceed as in (4.0) below to obtain named representatives and shall report to the Board when all representatives have been named. The Board shall then establish a School Planning Council for that school. (A provincial resource program is any program

directly funded by a government Ministry in addition to or other than the Ministry of Education for which the school district has contracted to provide educational services.)

- 3.2 For a school that is a provincial resource program, the Board will consider the establishment of a School Planning Council on receipt of a request from at least three (3) parents of students attending the provincial resource program. If the Board decides to establish the School Planning Council, the Principal will proceed to obtain named representatives as below.

4.0 MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1 The Principal of the school, one teacher representative, three parent representatives and, in schools enrolling students in grade 10, 11, 12, one student enrolled in one of those grades comprise the voting membership of the School Planning Council for the school. At least one of the parent representatives must be an elected officer of the Parent Advisory Council.
- 4.2 In order to facilitate meaningful consultation, collaboration, and dialogue, School Planning Councils are encouraged to provide for balanced representation of parents, teachers, and, where applicable, students.
- 4.3 The Principal shall consult with the Parent Advisory Council on its bylaws for the election of representatives to the School Planning Council to ensure that the bylaws safeguard the rights of parents to participate in this decision.
- 4.4 By May 31st of each year, the Principal of each school shall advise the Parent Advisory Council, if one exists, and the teachers in the school, of the need to elect representatives for the coming school year and the required process.
- 4.5 The Principal and the school's Surrey Teachers' Association representative(s) shall work together to ensure that the holding of the election for the School Planning Council's teacher representative is carried out by secret ballot and in accordance with the *School Act*.
- 4.6 If no teacher representative is elected by the staff by September 30th, no teacher representative shall be appointed. The Principal shall consider whether he or she is able to make any recommendations to the Board for an alternate appointment, and shall report to the Board by October 15th.
- 4.7 The term of office of a person appointed or elected under this section to the School Planning Council must not be more than one year. A representative may serve more than one term.
- 4.8 An employee of any Board is not eligible for election or appointment as a parent representative on the School Planning Council.

5.0 MEETINGS

- 5.1 The Principal of the school shall be the Chair of the School Planning Council. Where the Principal has delegated a Vice Principal to attend a meeting in his or her stead, the Vice Principal shall perform the functions of Chair for that meeting.
- 5.2 Meetings shall be open to members of the School Planning Council, invited guests, and others who have permission from the Council.

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- 5.3 The Principal shall call the first meeting of the School Planning Council prior to October 31 and shall arrange additional meeting dates and times as required.
 - 5.4 Quorum shall be the Principal and two (2) other members.
 - 5.5 Meetings are to be arranged for dates and times that are mutually convenient and agreed upon by School Planning Council representatives.
 - 5.6 The School Planning Council may meet by telephone or electronically, so long as all members can communicate with each other, and other participants can observe or audit proceedings.
 - 5.7 Additional meetings may be convened at the call of the Chair, upon at least one week's notice. Notice may be waived unanimously. An additional meeting must be called if requested by three (3) members.
 - 5.8 Any member may place an item on the proposed agenda of the next meeting by request to the Chair. As much as is feasible, agendas and supporting documents should be made available to School Planning Council members in advance of the meeting. Items may be added to the agenda at the beginning of the meeting if time permits.
 - 5.9 The Chair shall ensure that a record is kept in the custody of the school of meetings held and subjects discussed (in general terms) and decisions made.

6.0 DECISION-MAKING

- 6.1 A School Planning Council is an advisory body. Votes are not taken except on the approval of a proposed School Plan. On matters other than the School Plan referred to the Council in accordance with 1.1, it is desirable to offer a consensus opinion but it is not required.
- 6.2 A vote shall be held to approve the proposed School Plan before presentation to the Board as required by the *School Act*. Each member shall have one vote. The Chair shall vote at the same time as other members.
- 6.3 A School Planning Council may create sub-committees to investigate matters within the Council's jurisdiction and may invite additional participants to join the sub-committees.

7.0 FINANCIAL

- 7.1 Meeting expenses are the responsibility of the school. No School Planning Council representative should incur personal expenses for attendance at meetings.
- 7.2 A School Planning Council has no power to raise or spend money.

8.0 CONDUCT OF SCHOOL PLANNING COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

- 8.1 It is expected that parent representatives will function as representatives of all school families and represent their community of interest, not the interests of any subgroup.
- 8.2 Members are expected to be collaborative and respectful in the conduct of Council business and to abide by the rulings of the Chair.
- 8.3 Any complaint about the functioning of the School Planning Council should be made to the Council through its Chair. If the complaint is not resolved, then the complainant may address the complaint to the Assistant Superintendent.
- 8.4 If it appears, following investigation, that a member of a School Planning Council has been in breach of the School Planning Council Policy and Regulations, the Council may discharge the member and request that a new member be elected, or may appoint a new member if elections are not feasible. Before making such a decision, the School Planning Council shall ensure that the member has had the opportunity to respond to the allegations. The member may appeal the School Planning Council's decision to the Board. The Board will not be required to provide an oral hearing, but shall take into account any written representations.
- 8.5 Teacher representatives on the council are not subject to the direction of administration and will not suffer any discipline or retaliation through the employer for their participation in the council or for positions taken with respect to School Planning Council business.
- 8.6 Any retaliation by administration or school staff members against parent representatives or their children for their participation in the council or for positions taken with respect to council business will not be permitted.

9.0 ANNUAL SCHOOL PLAN

- 9.1 The Council is responsible for the preparation and approval of a proposed annual school plan, to be submitted in draft form to the Assistant Superintendent by June 30th. This time may be extended by the Assistant Superintendent. The final draft of the annual school plan must be filed by October 31st.
- 9.2 A School Planning Council must consult with the school's Parent Advisory Council during preparation of the school plan. At a minimum, consultation shall be a presentation at a Parent Advisory Council meeting, of which notice has been given to parents in accordance with Parent Advisory Council bylaws. The School Planning Council shall provide the Parent Advisory Council with a reasonable opportunity for input into the school plan and shall consider such input during the development of and prior to the approval of the school plan.
- 9.3 A School Planning Council will work in consultation with staff and other members of the school community regarding preparation of the school plan. The School Planning Council shall provide staff with a reasonable opportunity for input into the school plan and consider such input during the development of and prior to the approval of the school plan.

10.0 ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, MODIFICATION OF SCHOOL PLANS

- 10.1 In order for the proposed school plan to be adopted by the Board, it must be based on appropriate student achievement data and be consistent with the educational objectives, strategic directions and policies of the Board, meet legal requirements, be supportable from available resources, and be reasonably likely to achieve its goals.
- 10.2 Any member of the School Planning Council may provide an alternate report regarding the school plan to the Board.
- 10.3 If the Board rejects or modifies a proposed school plan, it shall provide reasons to the School Planning Council.

Revised: 2005-04-26

Approved: 2003-04-10

8.3 Sample School Planning Council Code of Ethics

- *A member shall* consider the best interests of all students.
- *A member shall* be guided by the school's and the school board's mission statements.
- *A member shall* act within the limits of the roles and responsibilities of a school Council, as identified by the school's operating guidelines, the school board, and the Ontario Ministry of Education.
- *A member shall* become familiar with the school's policies and operating practices and act in accordance with them.
- *A member shall* maintain the highest standards of integrity.
- *A member shall* recognize and respect the personal integrity of each member of the school community.
- *A member shall* treat all other members with respect and allow for diverse opinions to be shared without interruption.
- *A member shall* encourage a positive environment in which individual contributions are encouraged and valued.
- *A member shall* acknowledge democratic principles and accept the consensus of the Council.
- *A member shall* respect the confidential nature of some school business and respect limitations this may place on the operation of the school Council.
- *A member shall* not disclose confidential information.
- *A member shall* limit discussions at school Council meetings to matters of concern to the school community as a whole.
- *A member shall* use established communication channels when questions or concerns arise.
- *A member shall* promote high standards of ethical practice within the school community.
- *A member shall* declare any conflict of interest.
- *A member shall* not accept any payment or benefit financially through school Council involvement.

Source: Adapted from the bylaws of the Port Arthur Collegiate Institute School Council, Lakehead Board of Education, Thunder Bay, Ontario.

8.4 Suggested Parent Representative Election Process

May/June	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Parent Advisory Council committee including the principal is established to deal with the school planning council election of parent members.
Early to mid-June	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A plan is put in place to deal with how the school council election will occur. By the last council meeting of the school year, the date, time, location and process for the election are determined, as well as how the election will be advertised in the fall. A nomination form is also developed.
Mid-August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the welcome-back-to-school mailing, the principal includes parent-candidate nomination forms and information about the date by which nominations must be received at the school, who is eligible to stand for election, the date of the election, and other information about the election. This package must be in parents' hands at least fourteen days prior to the election.
Early September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The principal posts school planning council election information in an area of the school that is easily accessible to parents. Good venues would be the bulletin board and the school website.• Parents return nomination forms to the school.
Early to mid-September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A list of parent nominees with brief biographies is sent home or mailed out, with a reminder of the election date and information on the election process.
Mid- to end September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The ballot box is prepared for the election of parent representatives, and the arrangements are made for volunteers to help voters at the voting areas.• The election of the teacher, non-teacher, and student representatives may take place at the same time or shortly after the election of parent representatives.
Late September to early October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The first meeting of the new school planning council takes place, and meeting dates, times, and locations for the upcoming year are determined. (The first meeting of the new school council must take place on or before October 31.)• The names of the new school planning council members are publicized to the school community within thirty days of the election, as are the dates, times, and locations of future meetings.

8.5 Sample Parent Self-Nomination Form

I wish to declare my candidacy for an elected position as a parent/guardian representative on the School Planning Council.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: _____ Business phone: _____

E-mail: _____

I am the parent/guardian of, _____ who is currently registered at this school. (name of student)

I am an employee of the Board.

Yes

No

Candidate's signature

Date

Please include a brief autobiography on the back of this form.

You will be notified when your nomination has been received.

8.6 Sample Meeting Evaluation Form

Date: _____

Please take the time to complete this survey. This is your opportunity to improve future meetings.
Evaluation Scale

(Circle one) 1 not at all 2 3 4 5 very much so

1. Was the agenda of this meeting clear to you? 1 2 3 4 5

2. Were you encouraged to contribute as much as you wanted? 1 2 3 4 5

3. Did the atmosphere allow for free discussion? 1 2 3 4 5

4. Was there enough time for discussion? 1 2 3 4 5

5. Are you clear on what, if any, decision(s) was reached? 1 2 3 4 5

6. Are you clear on the next steps being taken? 1 2 3 4 5

7. Are you clear about who is responsible for taking the next steps? 1 2 3 4 5

8. Do you think the purpose of this meeting was fulfilled? 1 2 3 4 5

9. What aspects of this meeting were most appealing to you? (written response)

10. What aspects of this meeting were least appealing to you?

11. Any comments for the Chair on how the meeting was conducted?

12. Do you have suggestions for improving future meetings?

(You do not need to sign this sheet.)

____ Parent ____ Student ____ Teacher ____ Community member

(Please check appropriate space(s))

8.7 Sample Assessing Your Council's Effectiveness Tool

Sample Questionnaire: Assessing Your Council's Effectiveness

Are Council meetings effective?

rarely sometimes mostly always

How could Council meetings be improved?

Are we on track with our strategic plan?

not at all somewhat mostly consistently

What is the next step in our Council's strategic plan?

What is going well?

Do we need to change any of our processes?

How do we want to improve?

8.8 Commonly Used Measures

The following tables identify some of the measures that are commonly used in British Columbia, and suggest how they can be effectively used in school planning. These tables include only more formal standard measures that can be helpful when combined with ongoing teacher observations and assessments.

Provincial

Type of measure	Purpose	Uses
Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide provincial, district, and school monitoring of reading comprehension over time • Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results should be considered in developing rationale for goals and objectives • Results can provide evidence of growth and achievement <i>where there is a sufficiently large number of students</i> • In most elementary schools, statistical constraints make it difficult to use these scores to demonstrate gains/changes
Portfolios Can be considered 'standard' when specific requirements are agreed on or a provincial standard is set.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide comprehensive evidence of student achievement • Offer evidence for reporting to parents • Facilitate self-assessment • May provide evidence of growth over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results may be considered in developing rationale for goals and objectives for the next year • Results may provide a focus for strategies or interventions in the next year • Can provide evidence of achievement over a variety of situations and forms that may include a standard assessment; this can be the basis of evidence of change/improvement for school, grade, or sub-groups
Provincial Examinations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess individual student achievement (summative) • For grade 12 courses, these are final examinations that count 40% of a students' final grade • Participation rates should be considered • The total score is not directly related to reading; however some of the sub scores that are available to schools do relate to particular aspects of reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results should be considered in developing rationale for goals and objectives • Results can provide evidence of growth and achievement for overall achievement, <i>where there are a sufficiently large number of students.</i> • The overall examination results may not be helpful in tracking incremental changes in performance; however schools may choose to analyze some of the sub-scores (caution: the reliability of these will be somewhat lower than that of the total examination)
Provincial Satisfaction Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor provincial, district, and school perceptions of school safety • Accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results should be considered in developing rationale for goals and objectives • Results can provide evidence of change <i>where there is a sufficiently large number of students and the participation rate is high</i> • In most elementary schools, statistical constraints make it extremely difficult to use these scores to demonstrate gains/changes.

Commercial Standardized Assessment

Type of measure	Purpose	Use in School Plans
Diagnostic test/battery or screening assessment e.g. Kindergarten screening Informal Reading Inventories (e.g., Alberta Diagnostic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify which students require/will benefit from intervention in order to be successful Identify particular patterns of needs in order to plan intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results may help to provide rationale for goals or objectives Administration and tracking may be important part of strategies Typically not useful as evidence of achievement
Standardized achievement test (commercial) e.g., CTBS subtests CAT subtests Gates-McGinitie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified in manual Generally to measure reading comprehension according to a particular definition that is clearly described in the manual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results may contribute to rationale for goals and objectives Can provide evidence of achievement and growth May be used as baseline and repeated at regular (e.g., yearly) intervals Must ensure that the definition and specifications match the BC curriculum Highly desirable to validate by comparing results to classroom or other assessments Need a large sample in order to be confident that changes are ‘real’ –results are more trustworthy for large groups than for small groups; generally not appropriate for decisions about individuals.

Other Measures

Literacy: Reading & Writing

Type of measure	Purpose	Use in School Plans
BC Performance Standards E.g., used to construct and scores specific assessments OR to summarize results of a variety of evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support ongoing instruction and assessment Monitor, evaluate and report on individuals Develop profiles of class or group of students Facilitate discussion with parents, students, other teachers Set goals for individuals, classes, or schools Develop evidence for school plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be considered in developing rationale for goals and objectives Can help to focus strategies on key aspects of reading Can form the basis for specific reading tasks and assessments that become part of evidence of growth Can be used to summarize or create a composite from several sources including teacher judgment and standard measures; this can be the basis of evidence of change/improvement for school, grade, or sub-groups
Report Cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information related to achievement and progress made by individual students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results may contribute to rationale for goals and objectives Results can help to provide direction for strategies that will be implemented When used to compare across grades or used at the district level standards should be criterion referenced

Type of measure	Purpose	Use in School Plans
Reading School or district-developed reading assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various; typically focuses on assessment of student achievement in terms of reading fluency, accuracy, and/or comprehension • School or district should develop a clear statement of purpose and definition at the outset; this should guide all development and interpretation activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results may be used as part of rationale for goals and objectives • Results can help to provide direction for strategies that will be implemented • Results can form part of the evidence teachers use to make overall judgments about student achievement • Results can provide evidence of growth and achievement <i>where there is a sufficiently large number of students</i> • In most elementary schools, statistical constraints make it extremely difficult to use these scores by themselves to demonstrate gains/changes.
Reading assessment package or instrument E.g., DRA PM Benchmarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various; typically focuses on assessment of student achievement in terms of reading fluency, accuracy, and/or comprehension • Clear statement of purpose should be included in package or supporting material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the evidence teachers use in making overall judgments about student achievement and progress, they can contribute to the rationale for goals and objectives, and provide some of the evidence teachers consider when summarizing and creating a profile or composite • Results can provide evidence of growth and achievement <i>where there is a sufficiently large number of students</i> • In most elementary schools, statistical constraints make it extremely difficult to use these scores by themselves to demonstrate gains/changes.
Reading assessment tasks included in remedial or corrective reading kits or packages E.g., SRA Reading Lab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify particular students who need support or intervention • Determine the ‘level’ of text or task that is appropriate as a starting place for a student • Provide diagnostic information about particular skills or strategies • Determine whether a student will be able to work with the next ‘level’. 	<p><i>The quality of these is extremely varied; they need to be carefully evaluated in terms of the criteria above. The quality of the texts and tasks students are given is often a serious concern.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using these instruments to identify needs and track student progress may be important part of strategies • Typically not useful as evidence of achievement unless it can be demonstrated that texts and tasks are comparable to those normally encountered in school
Reading assessment tasks included with anthologies or collections of ‘little books’ or other resources E.g., -Nelson Language Arts -Collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various; primary purpose is typically to monitor fluency, accuracy and/or comprehension of the outcomes that the resource is designed to achieve • In some cases, these tasks or assessments are very narrowly focused on a particular skill that has been the focus of instruction; in others, they are intended to generalize over a broad range of outcomes or 	<p><i>The quality of these is extremely varied; they need to be carefully evaluated in terms of the criteria above</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When used over time, these may play a significant role in teachers’ ongoing assessment and the judgments teachers’ make • As part of the evidence teachers use in making overall judgments about students achievement and progress, they can contribute to the rationale for goals and objectives, and provide some of the evidence teachers consider when summarizing and creating a profile or composite • Often more useful as part of the strategies teachers use, as insights into where students are improving and what aspects they need help with.

Type of measure	Purpose	Use in School Plans
<p>Writing assessment tasks included in commercial programs, or remedial or corrective resources</p>	<p>competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify particular students who need support or intervention • Provide diagnostic information about particular skills or strategies a student has/has not achieved • Identify instructional strategies that may be appropriate for a particular student • Track student growth over time. 	<p><i>The quality of these is extremely varied; they need to be carefully evaluated in terms of the criteria above and to ensure that they match BC curriculum outcomes. There must be clear evidence that the interpretations offered are supported by research and evidence.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be useful to identify needs and track student progress as part of strategies • Typically not useful as evidence of achievement unless it can be demonstrated that the tasks and interpretations are comparable to those normally encountered in school and convergent with the BC curriculum
<p>Writing Samples Information or literary writing samples (resulting from regular classroom instruction)</p> <p>Note: these differ from Impromptu samples in that they are written within the context on ongoing classroom instruction and represent important assignments that focus on specific audiences and purposes. Several teachers at the same grade may decide to use the same assignment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the extent to which students have met expectations for key forms/purposes of writing appropriate for their grade level • Provide formative information teachers can use in planning instruction • Facilitate discussion among teachers • Develop evidence for school plans • Support ongoing instruction and assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results may be used as part of rationale for school goals and objectives • Results can help to provide direction for strategies that will be implemented • Results can form part of the evidence teachers use to make overall judgments about student achievement • Results can provide evidence of growth and achievement <i>where there is a sufficiently large number of students</i> • In most elementary schools, statistical constraints make it extremely difficult to use these scores by themselves to demonstrate gains/changes

Type of measure	Purpose	Use in School Plans
<p>Writing collections or portfolios</p> <p>Can be considered 'standard' when specific requirements are agreed on by several teachers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide comprehensive evidence of student writing achievement (may include an impromptu writing sample from a standard writing assessment) • Offer evidence for reporting to parents • Facilitate self-assessment • May provide evidence of growth over time 	<p><i>Note: when a collection of writing is used to establish the students' current achievement, only relatively recent work should be considered.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results from one year may be considered in developing rationale for goals and objectives for the next year • Results from one year can provide a focus for strategies or interventions in the next year • Can provide evidence of achievement in writing over a variety of situations and forms (that may include a standard assessment); this can be the basis of evidence of change/improvement for school, grade, or sub-groups.

Numeracy: Mathematics

Type of measure	Purpose	Use in School Plans
<p>BC Performance Standards</p> <p>E.g., used to construct and scores specific assessments OR to summarize results of a variety of evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support ongoing instruction and assessment • Monitor, evaluate and report on individuals • Develop profiles of class or group of students • Facilitate discussion with parents, students, other teachers • Set goals for individuals, classes, or schools • Develop evidence for school plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be considered in developing rationale for goals and objectives • Can help to focus strategies on key aspects of reading • Can form the basis for specific reading tasks and assessments that become part of evidence of growth • Can be used to summarize or create a composite from several sources including teacher judgment and standard measures; this can be the basis of evidence of change/improvement for school, grade, or sub-groups
<p>Report Cards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information related to achievement and progress made by individual students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results may contribute to rationale for goals and objectives • Results can help to provide direction for strategies that will be implemented • When used to compare across grades or used at the district level standards should be criterion referenced.
<p>Mathematics assessment tasks included in remedial or corrective reading kits or packages</p> <p>E.g., Schoolhouse Math Lab</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify particular students who need support or intervention • Determine the 'level' of task that is appropriate as a starting place for a student and/or whether they will be able to work at the next 'level' • Provide diagnostic information about particular skills or strategies 	<p><i>The quality of these is extremely varied; they need to be carefully evaluated in terms of the criteria above. The quality of the texts and tasks students are given is often a serious concern.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using these instruments to identify needs and track student progress may be important part of strategies • Typically not useful as evidence of achievement unless it can be demonstrated that texts and tasks are comparable to those normally encountered in school

Type of measure	Purpose	Use in School Plans
Mathematics assessments School or district-developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various; typically focuses on assessment of student achievement in terms of concepts, procedures, strategies and communication • School or district should develop a clear statement of purpose and definition at the outset; this should guide all development and interpretation activities • May be designed as performance tasks, or written tests, or a combination of both. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results may be used as part of rationale for goals and objectives • Results can help to provide direction for strategies that will be implemented • Results can form part of the evidence teachers use to make overall judgments about student achievement • Results can provide evidence of growth and achievement <i>where there is a sufficiently large number of students</i> • In most elementary schools, statistical constraints make it extremely difficult to use these scores by themselves to demonstrate gains/changes
Mathematics textbook assessment tasks or tests included with mathematics textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various; primary purpose is typically to monitor development of concepts, procedures, strategies, and communication that the resource is designed to achieve; typically organized by unit/strand • In some cases, these tasks or assessments are very narrowly focused on a particular skill that has been the focus of instruction; in others, they are intended to generalize over a broad range of outcomes or competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When used over time, these may play a significant role in teachers' ongoing assessment and the judgments teachers' make • As part of the evidence teachers use in making overall judgments about students achievement and progress, they can contribute to the rationale for goals and objectives, and provide some of the evidence teachers consider when summarizing and creating a profile or composite • Often more useful as part of the strategies teachers use, as these may provide insights into where students are improving and what aspects they need help with

Social Responsibility

Type of measure	Purpose	Use in School Plans
BC Performance Standards E.g., used to construct and scores specific assessments OR to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support ongoing instruction and assessment • Monitor, evaluate and report on individuals • Develop profiles of class or group of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be considered in developing rationale for goals and objectives • Can help to focus strategies on key aspects of reading • Can form the basis for specific reading tasks and assessments that become part of evidence of growth • Can be used to summarize or create a composite from several sources including teacher judgment and standard measures; this can be the basis of evidence of change/improvement

Type of measure	Purpose	Use in School Plans
summarize results of a variety of evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate discussion with parents, students, other teachers Set goals for individuals, classes, or schools Develop evidence for school plans 	for school, grade, or sub-groups
Social Responsibility Locally developed self-report instruments E.g., Bullying Survey Student Survey of Social Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of social responsibility within the school Identify issues and perceptions within the school community (set priorities) Track changes in self-reported behaviours Provide direction for strategies and interventions <i>Note: often focused at one or two grade levels.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results can contribute to rationale for goals and objectives Can provide evidence of achievement and growth provided that a large enough number of students are included—results are more trustworthy for large groups than for small groups May be used as baseline and repeated at regular (e.g.. yearly) intervals
Social Responsibility Locally developed behaviour rating scales based on the BC performance standards e.g., may provide several items for one or more aspects (i.e., contributing to the classroom and school community; solving problems in peaceful ways; valuing diversity and defending human rights; exercising democratic rights and responsibilities.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus observations and data collection for specific aspects of the Social Responsibility standards Monitor school improvement Assess the progress of individual students Identify particular patterns of needs in order to plan intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results may help to provide rationale for goals or objectives and set priorities Results can provide direction for strategies and interventions Often useful as evidence in tracking changes in student social responsibility, depending on the number of students observed and the reliability of the observations
Social Responsibility School/classroom observation instruments (most often locally developed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information about defined aspects of group behaviour (e.g., inclusion, respectful language and behaviour; peaceful problem- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results of these instruments can help to provide a rationale for school plans Using these instruments to identify priorities and focus interventions may be important part of strategies in schools Quality and precision is highly variable; teachers need considerable training and practice to make judgments consistently

Type of measure	Purpose	Use in School Plans
	solving) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify patterns of behaviour in order to plan intervention • Track changes over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is a large sample and the instrument is highly reliable, an instrument may measure change effectively.
Standardized behaviour rating scales E.g., Social Skills Rating System The Child Behaviour Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various, as described in a Manual that accompanies most of these measures • Provide information about defined aspects of individual or group behaviour (e.g., cooperation; aggression) • Identify particular students who need support or intervention • Identify particular patterns of behaviour in order to plan intervention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of these instruments can help to provide a rationale • Using these instruments to identify priorities and focus interventions may be important part of strategies • These instruments vary in sensitivity to change; in some cases, they will not reveal small changes in student behaviour; in other cases, particularly where there is a large sample and the instrument is highly reliable, an instrument may measure change effectively • See relevant Manual for specific information about how the results can be appropriately used.
Standardized self-report and projective scales E.g., Bryant's Empathy Index Feelings about My Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about defined aspects of individual or group behaviour (e.g., empathy; perspective-taking) • Identify particular students who need support or intervention • Identify patterns of behaviour in order to plan intervention • Track changes in individuals or groups over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of these instruments can help to provide a rationale • Using these instruments to identify priorities and focus interventions may be important part of strategies • Where there is a large sample and the instrument is highly reliable, these instruments can provide evidence of change • Consult the publisher's or researcher's manual to find out whether or not the instrument will detect relatively small changes in student behaviour, and the minimum number of students needed.

8.9 Assessment Of/For/As Learning

What Is “Assessment Of Learning”?

Assessment Of learning determines what learning has taken place at a particular point in time. Examples of these assessments based in the classroom might be quizzes, tests, performance-based assessments during the end of a unit or term. Examples of these assessments from external sources might be the provincial Foundation Skills Assessment administered yearly to all Grade 4 and 7 students. The latter are intended to show trends over time with those populations. While these measures of public accountability are important, the most relevant Assessment Of Learning takes place in the classroom context, and is carried out less frequently than other ongoing classroom-based assessments.

- Assessment Of Learning takes place after the learning has taken place, while Assessment For Learning takes place during the learning.
- The teacher uses provincial curriculum guidelines to design classroom programs. The most relevant Assessments Of Learning are achievements based on classroom curriculum plans.
- Translating classroom assessment information into evaluative feedback to students that is results based rather than descriptive
- Provides numerical or evaluative feedback to students about achievement
- Using marks with students rather than descriptive feedback
- While assessments FOR learning provide descriptive language to explain to students how they can improve, assessments OF learning provide evaluative information such as a number, a level, or a grade.
- Assessments Of Learning are important, and need to be conducted throughout a school year, but much less frequently than ongoing descriptive assessments. Assessments Of Learning can be quite vague, because they provide only a number, level, or grade, and do not inform students on where they are able to improve.
- Informing students about results of a one-time assessment after learning goals have been articulated in other ongoing assessments.
- Achievement status is reported out to inform students and others about student performance.
- In Assessment Of Learning, the goal is the score; in Assessment For learning, the goal is reaching the target described, using feedback to improve next time.

What Is “Assessment For Learning”?

When assessing for learning, teachers use classroom assessment and the continuous flow of information about student achievement that it provides to advance, not merely check on, student learning. This is accomplished by the following:

- Understanding and articulating in advance of teaching the achievement targets that their students can strive toward.
- Informing students about learning goals in terms students can understand from the very beginning.
- Becoming assessment literate so that the assessments toward the achievement goals are dependable and accurate
- Understand the relationship between student motivation and achievement and use assessment to build confidence
- Translating classroom assessment information into feedback to students that is frequent and descriptive (vs. evaluative)
- Continuously adjusting instruction based on classroom assessments
- Using criteria, rubrics and exemplars with students to help them make informed adjustments

When Does It Become “Assessment As Learning”?

When considering assessment as learning, it is important to understand that when students are thinking about and acting on their learning – assessment becomes something that everyone does. When assessment for learning is a classroom focus, and evolves to involving students as an integral part of the discussion and planning process, it becomes assessment as learning. This is accomplished by the following:

- Engaging students in regular self-assessment; targets are constant so students can grow over time and learn to be in charge of their own success
- Actively involving students in communicating with their teachers and families about achievement status and improvement
- Making sure that students understand how the achievement targets that they strive to reach “now” relate to those that will come “after”
- Having students describe achievement goals and what comes next in their learning
- Teachers articulating their thinking process aloud to help students make connections about their own thinking processes
- Students utilizing well-developed and internalized criteria to strive to reach learning goals
- Students becoming their own best assessors

8.10 District/School Review Guidelines

1. Setting Directions: Goals and Objectives

Improving districts and schools have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in relevant goals and objectives for improving achievement for all students.

Questions

- What specific goals have you chosen for improving student achievement?
- What objectives have you chosen to support your goals?
- What process is used to review and revise goals and objectives to ensure a focus on areas of need?
- How do the goals and objectives address achievement for all students:
 - The most challenged?
 - The most able?

Guide

Not Yet	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Sustaining Improvement
Goals and objectives have little focus on student achievement.	Some goals and objectives are based on evidence and focused on student achievement.	All goals and objectives are relevant, based on evidence, and focused on student achievement.	All goals and objectives are relevant, based on a range of evidence, and focused on student achievement. Goals and objectives are systematically reviewed and revised. Consideration is given to all students.

Comments:

2. Setting Directions: Rationale

Improving districts and schools have a thorough and connected set of reasons, based on evidence, for the selection of their student achievement goals and objectives.

Questions

- What reasons do you have for selecting your goals and objectives?
- When selecting your goals and objectives what specific groups of students were you most concerned about? How did you determine this?
- Your data seem to indicate some challenges and/or opportunities to enhance student achievement in _____. How did you consider this information when developing your goals and objectives?

Guide

Not Yet	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Sustaining Improvement
Reasons for the selection of goals and objectives appear to be based on little consideration of evidence from data.	There is some evidence that the reasons for the selection of goals and objectives are based on relevant data.	Reasons for the selection of goals and objectives are based on evidence from a variety of sources and focused on student achievement.	Reasons for the selection of goals and objectives are consistently based on evidence from a variety of sources and focused on the achievement of all students.

Comments:

3. Setting Directions: Data (Evidence)

Improving districts and schools are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school, district and provincial data. The analysis of this evidence informs the selection of district goals and objectives and is used to monitor progress.

Questions

- When setting your goals and objectives, what data (evidence) did you consider:
 - Provincial?
 - District?
 - School?
 - Classroom?
- What did the data (evidence) tell you about the achievement of all students?
- How are you disaggregating data to get a deeper understanding of particular groups of students?
- How are you aggregating data from the classroom to use at the school and district levels?
- What did you observe when you considered your participation rates?
- How are you tracking data (evidence) over time?
- What data (evidence) did you find most useful?
- How are staff and SPCs engaged in working with data?

Guide

Not Yet	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Sustaining Improvement
It is unclear what data are used to determine areas of need and to plan for improvement.	Evidence from data are used or beginning to be used to determine areas of need and to plan for improvement, and to monitor progress.	The district and schools consistently analyze classroom, school, district and provincial data sources to determine areas of need, to plan for improvement, and to monitor progress.	The district and schools consistently analyze classroom, school, district, and provincial data sources to determine areas of need, to plan for improvement, and to monitor progress of all students. Data are disaggregated, participation rates are considered, and trends are tracked over time.

Comments:

4. Organizing for Improvement: Strategies

Improving districts and schools have focused, well organized improvement plans in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals and objectives are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.

Questions

- How did you determine the strategies to support your goals and objectives?
- What strategies are you using in your improvement efforts in the areas of:
 - staff development?
 - assessment practices?
 - instructional practices?
 - other?
- What specific strategies are in place for schools that do not demonstrate improvement?
- What specific strategies are in place for groups of students who do not demonstrate improvement?
- How do you monitor strategies and adapt or refine them as required?
- What strategies or interventions are you finding particularly promising?

Guide

Not Yet	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Sustaining Improvement
Strategies are not connected to school and/or district goals and objectives.	The district and schools have improvement strategies in place with some connection to goals and objectives.	The district and schools have practical, research-based strategies in place to achieve goals and objectives. Strategies link to staff development and other improvement efforts. There is evidence of monitoring and adjusting strategies as required.	The district and schools have practical, research-based strategies in place to achieve goals and objectives. Strategies are in place to address areas of highest need and link to staff development and other improvement efforts. The district and schools consistently monitor and adjust strategies as required.

Comments:

5. Organizing for Improvement: Structures

Improving districts and schools have aligned structures – resources, time, organization – to get the results they want. This includes, but is not limited to, effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.

Questions

- How did you determine the structures you are using in your improvement efforts?
- What structural changes are in place/are you considering as a result of identifying areas for improvement?
- What specific structures are in place for schools that do not demonstrate improvement?
- How do you monitor your structures and adapt or refine them as required?
- What promising practices from other schools or districts have you considered?
- How do your structures align with your strategies?

Guide

Not Yet	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Sustaining Improvement
The district and schools have not aligned structures to support school and/or district goals and objectives.	The district and schools have some structures in place to support school and/or district goals and objectives.	The districts and schools have structures in place to support school and/or district goals and objectives. Structures support areas of highest need and align with strategies.	The districts and schools have structures in place to support school and/or district goals and objectives. Structures support the areas of highest and align with strategies. Structures are consistently monitored and adjusted as required.

Comments:

6. Organizing for Improvement: Coherence/Alignment

In improving districts, there is a connection between school and district goals and objectives. School uniqueness and district directions are both valued. Schools connect with other schools to build capacity.

Questions

- Describe the connection between school and district plans.
- Describe how the school board:
 - Consults with the SPCs.
 - Approves school plans.
- To what degree do schools develop goals or objectives that respond to their unique circumstances?
- How is the link between school and district plans reinforced and supported?
- How are links among schools reinforced and supported?
- Describe the connection between the Enhancement Agreement and school plans.
- Describe the connection between the Enhancement Agreement and the district Accountability Contract.

Guide

Not Yet	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Sustaining Improvement
There is little connection between school and district plans, and there is little evidence of efforts to develop connections.	The district and schools are developing connections between school and district plans.	Connections between the district and schools are interactive and reflect school uniqueness and district directions.	Connections between the district and schools are interactive and reflect school uniqueness and district directions. Schools connect with other schools to build capacity.

Comments:

7. Building Learning Communities: Dialogue and Communication

Improving districts and schools maintain relationships that promote continuous dialogue about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made in specific areas of focus.

Questions

- How do you ensure communication about student achievement is consistent, timely, and delivered in multiple ways:
 - With staff?
 - With parents?
 - With students?
 - With the community?
- What strategies do you use to seek input from these groups?
- What strategies have you found most effective for strengthening dialogue about student achievement?
- How do you build relationships with all communities in your district and schools that enable you to connect in an ongoing dialogue about student achievement?

Guide

Not Yet	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Sustaining Improvement
There is no consistent approach to communicating about student achievement.	The district and schools communicate about student achievement and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made.	The district and schools communicate in multiple ways about improving student achievement. There are opportunities for dialogue and community input is valued.	The district and schools communicate in multiple ways about improving student achievement. There are ongoing opportunities for dialogue and community input is actively sought and valued. These practices are embedded in school and district culture and are sustained over time.

Comments:

8. Building Learning Communities: Parent Involvement

Improving districts and schools work with parents, including specific groups of parents, to improve student achievement.

Questions

- At the school and district:
 - How are parents encouraged to support their child’s achievement?
 - How are parents and parent groups, including the PAC(s) and DPAC, involved in efforts to improve student achievement?
- How are SPCs reaching out to engage all parents, including specific groups such as Aboriginal, Special Needs and ESL, to support achievement for all students?
- What strategies are you finding most useful in engaging parents?

Guide

Not Yet	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Sustaining Improvement
There is little evidence of parent involvement. Few ideas are sought or heard in setting goals and working collaboratively to improve the achievement of all students.	Some groups of parents have a role in setting goals and working collaboratively with schools and the district to improve the achievement of all students.	Parents, individually and collectively, are actively involved in setting goals and are working collaboratively with schools and the district to improve the achievement of all students.	Parents, individually and collectively, are actively involved in setting goals and are working collaboratively with schools and the district to improve the achievement of all students. Efforts to engage less active parents as well as specific groups of parents are evident. Parental involvement is embedded in school and district culture and sustained over time.

Comments:

9. Building Learning Communities: Leadership

Leaders in improving districts and schools have a clear vision for, and commitment to improving achievement for all students. Leadership at all levels, in all roles, is encouraged and systematically developed in a collaborative learning community with a focus on improving student achievement.

Questions

- How are the district and schools providing for the leadership development of principals, vice-principals, teachers, support staff, district staff, parents and students?
- How is leadership development focused on improving student achievement?
- How are the district and schools working as a team to improve student results?
- What processes are in place for a team approach to examine student achievement results?

Guide

Not Yet	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Sustaining Improvement
There is little evidence of collaborative leadership.	There is some evidence of collaborative leadership.	Leadership is collaborative at all levels of the system with a shared commitment to improving student achievement.	Leadership is collaborative at all levels of the system with a shared commitment to improving student achievement. Efforts to build and sustain leadership capacity all levels is evident.

Comments:

10. Achieving Results

Improving districts and schools improve results. They monitor and make adjustments in key areas of student achievement – in classrooms, schools and the district.

Questions

- What are your expected results/performance targets?
- How are you monitoring your progress?
- How are you considering the progress of all students?
- What results are you finding so far?
- Based on your results, what adjustments are you making?
- Have there been surprises or unexpected outcomes?
- Have you identified any new challenges?
- What evidence can you present to demonstrate that every school in your district is an improving school?
- What evidence can you present to demonstrate that every classroom in your school(s) is an improving classroom?

Guide

Not Yet	Approaching Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Sustaining Improvement
There is little evidence of monitoring results and adjusting to improve student achievement.	The district and schools are beginning to monitor results and make adjustments to improve student achievement.	The district and schools monitor results and make adjustments to improve student achievement. There is evidence of improving results.	The district and schools consistently monitor results and make adjustments to improve student achievement. There is evidence of improving results over time.

Comments:

Strengths

Team observations of particular strengths.

Promising Practices

District or school practices that could be helpful to other districts with a similar focus.

Recommendations

Team recommendations for strengthening school and district focus on student achievement and for improving results.

Priorities (Optional)

Team identification of areas needing immediate attention.