

November 2, 2007

At the Superintendent's Northern Chapter meeting in October, I met with Kathy Sawchuk, Assistant Superintendent, School District No. 59 (Peace River South). Kathy told me about the project they have in place to track each student. This fits well with our proposals to teach individual student success. This is Kathy's report.

Planning for one child at a time

For the past eight years, we have been collecting data on individual student performance in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy and social responsibility. The District supports the use of the District Reading Assessment for the primary grades and the District Reading Assessment Tool for all other grade levels. We are currently using these tools with students from grades 1 to 8. Next year, the grade 9 students will be included as part of the district data collection plan. BC Performance Standards are used to collect achievement information in the areas of reading, writing, numeracy and social responsibility. The data collection occurs within the classroom; every classroom teacher has a computer and each teacher inputs the information for his/her students. We recognize the importance of authentic classroom based assessments, and we believe teachers know their students best. All students are included in the data; no one is excused. In September, classroom teachers complete the District Reading Assessment with each student, and this process occurs again in June. The Achieve data, BC Performance Standards, is collected in June each year. The data is compiled through a District database where it can be organized in a variety of ways and formats.

Last year a new format was added: individual student profiles. The profile is historical in that it provides the achievement levels for every grade level the student has

completed. This is a one-page document containing the District Reading Assessment levels and the BC Performance Standards achievement information. A quick review of a student's profile lets us know if the student is reading at grade level.

Over time our capacity to use the data to help us gain a deeper understanding of the needs of our students has grown. A number of processes and structures are in place throughout the district. We began by using the September District Reading Assessment to identify grade 2 students who were significantly below the grade 1 level. The data is reviewed by the literacy itinerant teachers who then go to their assigned schools where they engage in conversations to ensure these students are on the radar of both the classroom teacher and the school based learning assistance teacher. The itinerant literacy teachers are involved in supporting interventions for these students. The students identified are assessed again in January. The results are reviewed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention by examining the progress of each student.

If a student is not progressing, plans are made for further assessment. The learning assistance teachers, in partnership with the classroom teachers, complete the first stage of assessment. The information gathered at this stage informs the next steps to be taken. In some cases, a plan is developed to support the student and in other instances referrals are made to the School Psychologist. Our goal is to know as much as we can about the student in order to meet the student wherever he or she is in their learning.

Last year the District special education staff approached a number of schools and offered to conduct file reviews of every student not reading at grade level. The student profiles were used to identify students and a team of

five visited all the elementary schools in Chetwynd and Tumbler Ridge. We asked a number of questions: What do we know about this child? What are the barriers to learning? What interventions have been implemented to reduce the impact of the barriers? What are the child's strengths?

In cases where files did not provide this information, a plan was made for the special education team to conduct further assessment. Once the assessments were completed, two representatives from the team presented a summary of the team's findings to the staff.

In addition to this work, the district counseling team also reviewed the profiles to identify vulnerable students. The following domains were considered factors: academic vulnerability, social/emotional vulnerability, availability of resources such as shelter and food, and support systems including family structure. Every elementary student was included in the process. From this, specific schools and students were the focus of the counseling staff and the community links funded initiatives.

At the end of the 2006/07 school year, the student profiles were once again reviewed. In the schools where we had conducted the special education file review, we found there were no surprises. We know the students who are achieving, and we know the students who are not. The key here is we know a great deal about those who are not. There is a plan for each student based on the information we have. Our focus is on improvement based on what is appropriate for each one of these students.

The plan is to continue the work; we are working together to know the needs of each child. We now have the ability to build a school demographic based on the profiles of each student so there will be a direct link between the needs of students and the organization of the school. We can be intentional, and the achievement of each child will provide us with the ongoing feedback that will continue to inform our work.

Whatever it takes.....one child at a time.

Thank you, Kathy. Principals, I'm sure have their own processes for following up. At the meeting today with Board Chairs and Superintendents, we provided a list of each student from each district who did not complete grade 12 last year. It's a beginning. It's a conversation that needs to take place.



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