

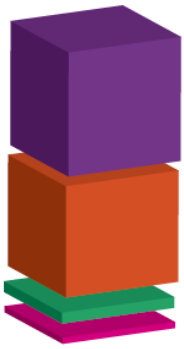


Vancouver
School Board

DISTRICT PLAN FOR STUDENT LEARNING

2013/2014





Enrollment

29,000 Elementary students

26,000 Secondary students

2,500(FTE) Adult Education students

1,410 Students in distributed learning programs



25% of K - Gr 12 students are designated ELL



60% speak a language other than English at home

126 languages have been identified in our schools



9% of elementary students are French Immersion learners



4% of secondary students are French Immersion learners



7% of elementary and secondary students are special education learners



16% of students participate in a school meal program



4% of secondary students are Aboriginal learners

2000 self-identified Aboriginal students representing 600 bands and nations attend Vancouver schools



- Our schools reside on Musqueam and Coast Salish Traditional Territory
- 92 elementary schools, including 16 elementary annexes
- 18 secondary schools
- 6 Adult Education centres
- One Distributed Learning School - Vancouver Learning Network that serves both elementary and secondary students
- District Programs of choice at both the elementary and secondary level, including early and late French Immersion, Intensive French, Mandarin Bilingual, Fine Arts, Gifted, International Baccalaureate, Montessori, Mini Schools and Academies.
- District alternate programs that address a wide range of learning needs and alternate pathways to graduation.

Mission Statement

To enable students to reach their intellectual, social, aesthetic and physical potential in challenging and stimulating settings which reflect the worth of each individual and promote mutual respect, cooperation and social responsibility.

District Context

The Vancouver School District is a large, urban and multicultural school district that includes some of the most affluent and impoverished urban neighbourhoods in the country. This setting provides wonderful opportunities as well as serious challenges. The Vancouver School District is among the most diverse of public school systems in Canada, with an annual enrolment of approximately 56,000 students in Kindergarten to Grade 12. In addition, the Vancouver School District provides Adult Education programming at six centres, as well as Continuing Education non-academic programs for the broader community. Our programs and services address extraordinary combinations of challenge, need, opportunity and potential that exist in every student we serve.

On the one hand, many students living in this urban environment are able to take advantage of opportunities to experience and learn from diverse cultures and reap the benefits of involvement with highly sophisticated and experienced arts and recreational groups that you would expect to find in a world-class city. Vancouver schools are involved in a wide range of partnerships with cultural, arts and service organizations. The district also offers a variety of services and program options to meet diverse student interests and needs.

On the other hand, many children, due to poverty and other inhibitors, are excluded from the choices and opportunities that a city the size of Vancouver can offer. The issues facing these children and their families are becoming more complex. The district continues to work closely with other community agencies and organizations to address these challenges.

The District Plan for Student Learning

The District Plan for Student Learning is informed by the [VSB Strategic Plan 2011-2016](#) which contains the following goals:

1. Students are fully engaged in learning
2. All students are included and have the opportunity to succeed
3. Our communities, families and educational partners are effectively engaged in supporting student success
4. Our school district is efficient, effective and sustainable

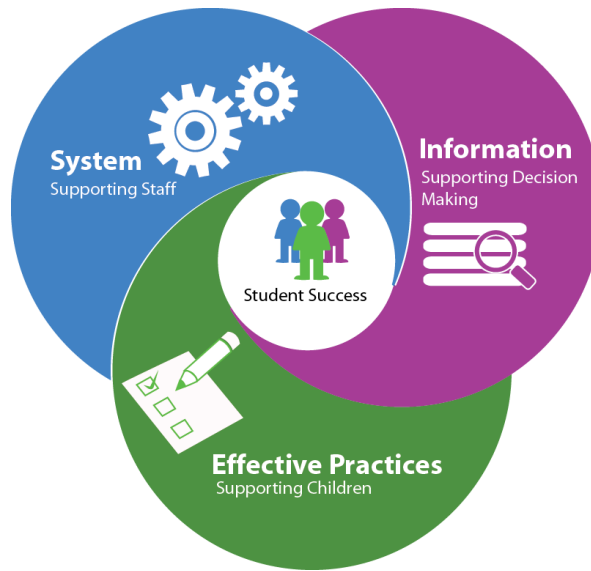
In support of the Strategic Plan, the district continues to focus on Literacy development as a key determinant of student success. We have clear data that our early intervention initiative is resulting in improved learning and achievement for students. The adoption of the Five Year Early Intervention Plan has provided further targeted staffing in support of this initiative, which expanded to 39 schools this year.

The District Plan for Student Learning is also closely aligned with the goals and implementation processes of the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. As a district we continue to identify practices which are resulting in learning success for Aboriginal students, and in improved graduation rates. Each of our School Growth Plans for 2013-2014 will include a goal related to the development of Aboriginal cultural awareness, as well as identifying strategies and structures to support the learning success of individual Aboriginal students within each school. We have piloted a strategy this spring to improve the graduation rates of Aboriginal students by developing individualized plans and targets, and we anticipate a significant increase in the number of students who will graduate in June 2013.

And for all students we are committed to increasing engagement in learning, through opportunities for student voice, leadership, and program choice.

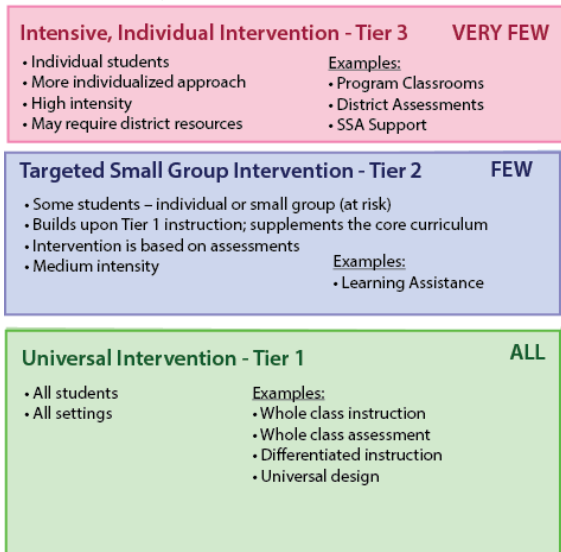
Our Vision of Student Success

Success for Each Student

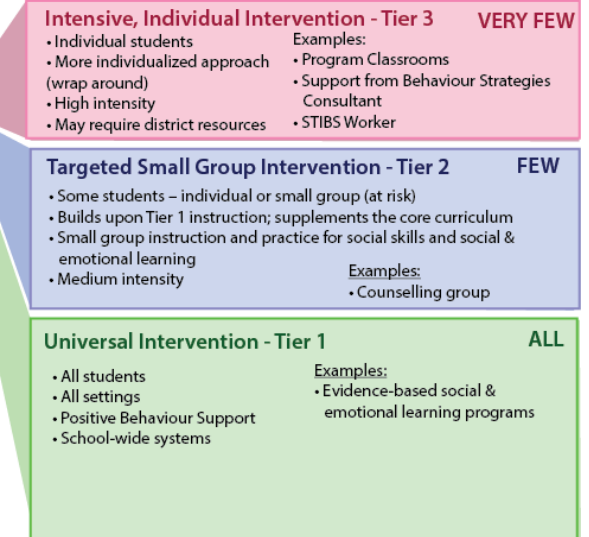


Response to Intervention

Learning Systems



Social - Emotional, Behavioral Systems



Our vision of success for each student, as illustrated in the Success for Each Student graphic, is based on the Response to Intervention framework, which encompasses both academic (Learning Systems) and behaviour (Social-Emotional, Behavioural Systems). Each tier of this model represents increasingly intense services that are associated with increasing levels of learner needs. Interventions at all three tiers are based on assessment information, and aimed at improving student response to instruction, and student outcomes.



Tier 1: At the **Universal Intervention** level, the phrase 'each student' refers to every student enrolled in a regular classroom. This represents high quality instruction, assessment, and monitoring of student success to support academic and social emotional functioning.



Tier 2: **Targeted Small Group Interventions** are determined by a collaborative School Based Team process. The assessment focus is increasingly narrow to determine the specific areas that are interfering with a student's ability to learn or demonstrate learning. Instruction is designed to increase success. Small group instruction may support learning, support social emotional functioning, enrich or restore cultural learning, and enrich or extend learning experiences.



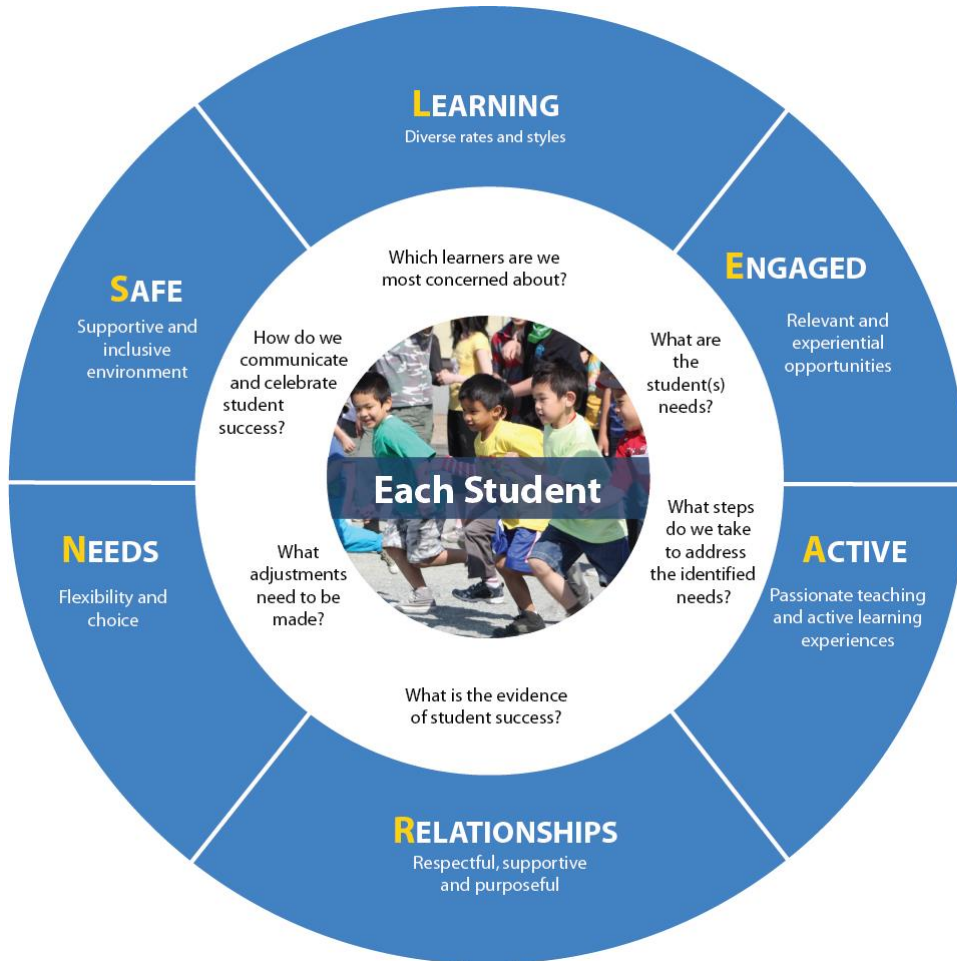
Tier 3: **Intensive, Individual Intervention** refers to the set of services, supports, strategies and instructional approaches that are required to create conditions of success for students whose needs are highly defined. At this level, a highly individualised approach is taken to both assessment and instruction. Each intervention is carefully monitored for its effectiveness.

The Vancouver School District is committed to working with families and outside agencies to further provide for the success of each student. We promote the values of meaningful consultation when working to make decisions regarding services, supports or placement decisions. This works most effectively when we are able to collaborate with families as early as possible. We have structures in place to assist with programming transition from pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten.

Foundations for Student Success

Introduction

Three years of work on an Appreciative Inquiry resulted in our identifying six underlying conditions for successful learning. We know that the best learning occurs when there is recognition of and support for a diversity of rates and styles of learning; when engaging experiential learning opportunities are presented within and beyond the classroom; when active learning experiences are created by passionate teachers, when relationships are respectful, supportive, and purposeful; when there is flexibility and choice in the system, and when there is a safe and supportive environment. We continue to embrace this set of understandings and are committed to ensuring these conditions underpin our work in supporting teachers and students.



Learning
Engaged
Active
Relationships
Needs
Safe

Areas of Focus

The research is clear that attending to the social and emotional needs of children and youth, and providing quality early learning experiences are fundamental to preparing students to learn, and for creating the conditions for student success. In our district we have developed programs, initiatives and partnerships to support these foundational areas. We place emphasis on providing supports for vulnerable students, and in particular, on improving the chances for success of our Aboriginal learners.

“Emotions can facilitate or impede children's academic engagement, work ethic, commitment and ultimate school success”

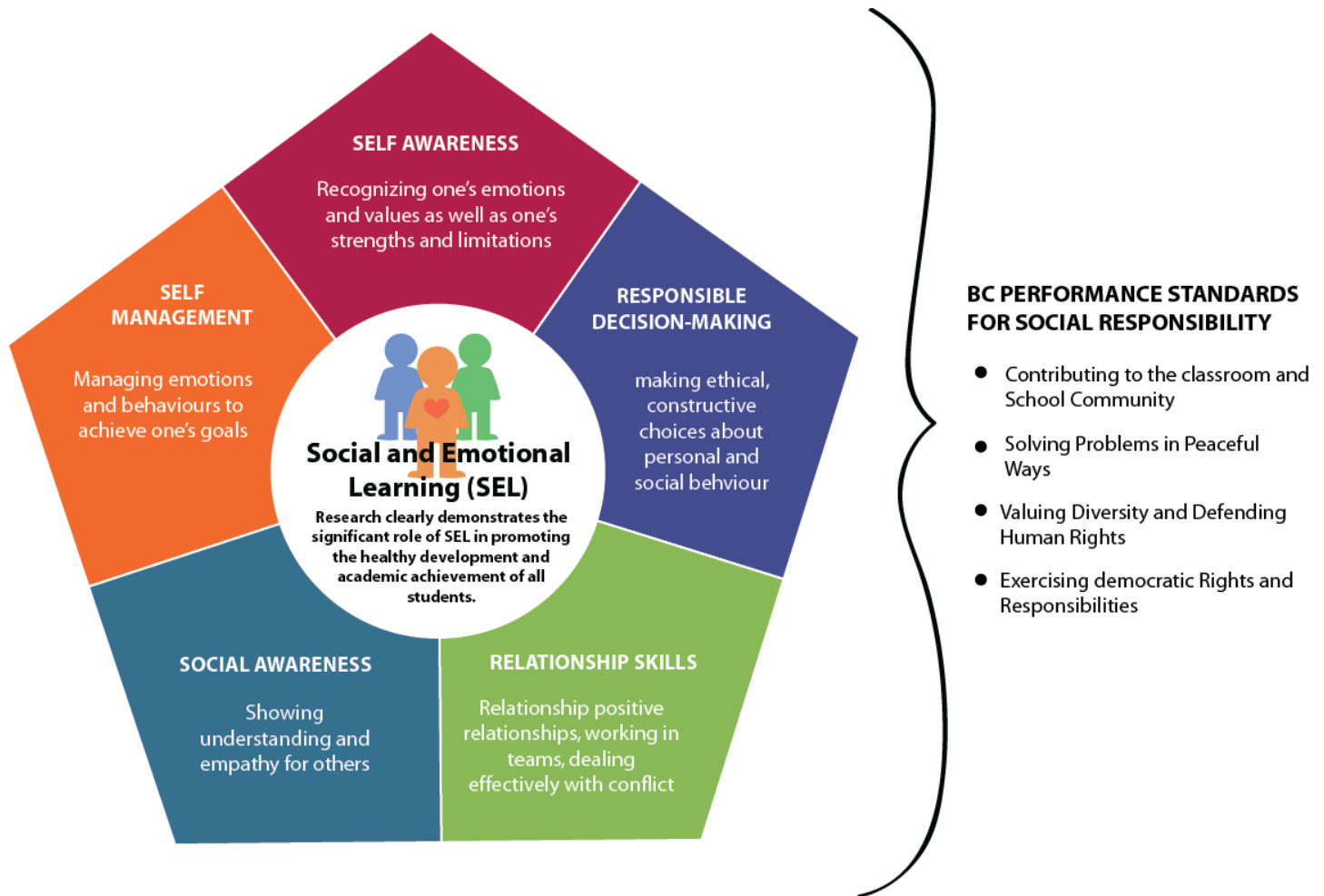
Durlak et al., 2011

Social Responsibility

The Vancouver School District considers a focus on social responsibility and social and emotional learning (SEL) to be foundational to each student's success, and expects that all schools intentionally attend to these areas, ensuring that learning takes place within a context of positive relationships and within a safe, caring, and inclusive environment. There is broad understanding that when schools explicitly teach and provide opportunities for students to develop and practice their social and emotional competencies, student learning is improved. Within a safe, caring and inclusive school environment students are more likely to thrive. In fact, the provincial ERASE initiative, launched this school year, has highlighted the importance of positive school climate, student connectedness, and inclusive respectful learning environments to reducing bullying behaviours and enhancing school safety.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING:

SEL is the process whereby children and adults develop essential social and emotional skills, knowledge, and attitudes related to:



Student sense of belonging continues to be an important value shared with the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement. Schools continue to aim to increase each student's sense of belonging and safety, paying particular attention to the needs of vulnerable students. Schools establish strategies to address the needs of vulnerable students, increase equity and inclusion, and support successful transitions, particularly the transition between elementary and secondary school; these strategies are supported by members of the Community School Teams as well as by counsellors and other staff members.

Early Learning



Early learning focuses on young children's physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and creative potential. Making the most of young children's capacity for learning, and their natural curiosity and desire to learn in the early years, is central to success for our students.

We know from the research and work of the Human Early Learning Partnership (H.E.L.P.) that twenty-five percent (25%) of learners are vulnerable even before they enter Kindergarten, and that this is not necessarily due to poverty. Furthermore, research indicates that the environments where children spend their time in their early years sculpt their brain and affect health and behaviour as well as learning (H.E.L.P.) Additionally, developmentally appropriate practice, especially play experiences and experiences in the arts, develops self-regulation in young learners, which has a profound effect on learning.

In our District, we recognize and support the principles of early learning for our culturally, linguistically, and socially diverse students so that they become successful and lifelong learners.

The District LEARNS framework corresponds to the Ministry of Education [BC Early Learning Framework](#) with a mutual focus on active, experiential learning, diversity, safe and caring relationships, and more.



The District's continuing emphasis on literacy is also congruent with the Early Learning Framework's focus on language and literacies. Literacy is fundamental to learning and students' success both in school and beyond. Early literacy includes the important role of talk; dialogue and scaffolding with adults; making meaning of a variety of texts; emergent reading and writing; multi-literacies (multi-media, the arts). These are all important facets of early learning.

In working towards success for our students the District works in partnership with community organizations to support early learning/literacy. Initiatives include:

- Ready, Set, Learn
- Strong Start Centres
- Welcome to Kindergarten

In order to meet the needs of individual learners along a continuum of learning 0 to 8 years, the District continues to implement and strengthen the above programs, and recognizes the importance of partnering with families and caregivers in providing these early learning experiences.

Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement

The Vancouver Board of Education continues to honour its commitment to the [Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement](#). Over the last year, the District supported numerous cultural events, classroom and community learning experiences and the addition of many new resources promoting authentic Aboriginal histories, cultural contributions and increased knowledge of contemporary human rights issues.

The District implemented the Aboriginal Intervention Management System (AIMS) which allowed Aboriginal Education Enhancement workers, as well as school administrators and other teachers working Aboriginal students, to record and track daily interventions related to the AEEA goals of Belonging, Mastery, and Culture/Community. This system has enabled the board to identify gaps in service delivery and allow for targeted coordinated responses to specific school needs. The District continued to support school use of the Aboriginal Education Connections Tool that creates opportunities for educators to share in dialogue and monitor student sense of belonging, engagement and connectedness in four domains; School Life, Academic Engagement, Attendance, Peer & Adult Relationships.

The District values the contributions made by representatives of Aboriginal community organizations and governmental agencies, as well as post-secondary institutions. We continue to build formal and informal networks in support of Aboriginal student success within and outside the school setting.

A major undertaking of the District this past year was the implementation of the [Aboriginal Focus School](#) at Macdonald Elementary. Under the direction of an Aboriginal principal the program started with one class of students in the early primary years. An Aboriginal teacher was retained the early success of this program has encouraged the introduction of a second class during the new school year. The installation and inclusion of major pieces of Aboriginal art help to create a welcoming and culturally representative school environment.

All schools have been asked to include a goal for the development of Aboriginal cultural enhancement awareness in their 2013-14 School Growth Plans.



Literacy Goal

Each student will read, write, speak and listen with competence, confidence and enjoyment.

Objectives

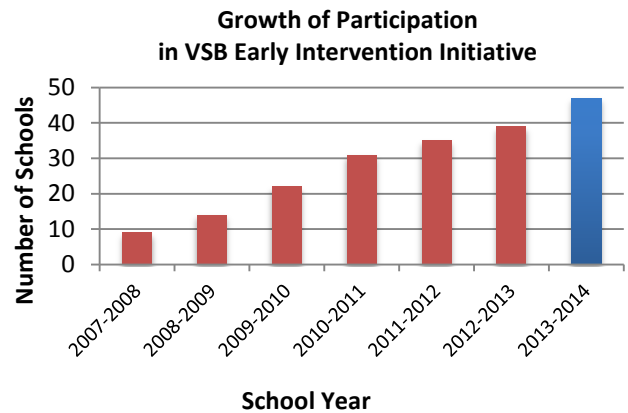
1. To improve student reading comprehension
2. To improve student written expression
3. To improve oral communication skills

Actions and Results

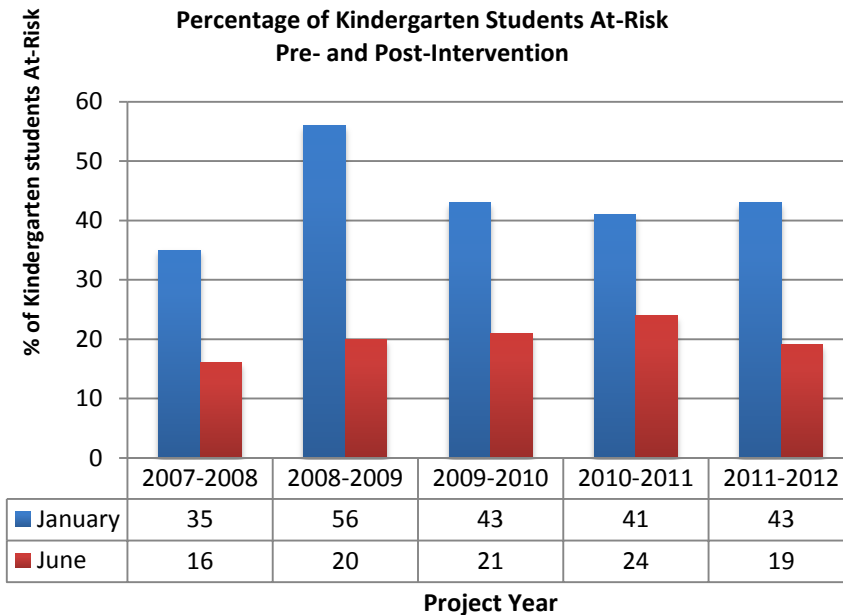
Focus on Early Intervention

In 2011-12 the Board of Education approved, in principle, the Early Intervention Five Year Plan 2012-17. The initiative has been underway since 2006 and is now in 39 English and French Immersion elementary schools.

The early intervention model begins with the identification of children at risk using Marie Clay’s “Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement”. Between January and June of the Kindergarten year, children are provided with intensive, targeted support.



The table below indicates the difference in percentage of Kindergarten students who have been identified as ‘at-risk’ each year, and the June improved results, following their participation in the Early Intervention initiative.

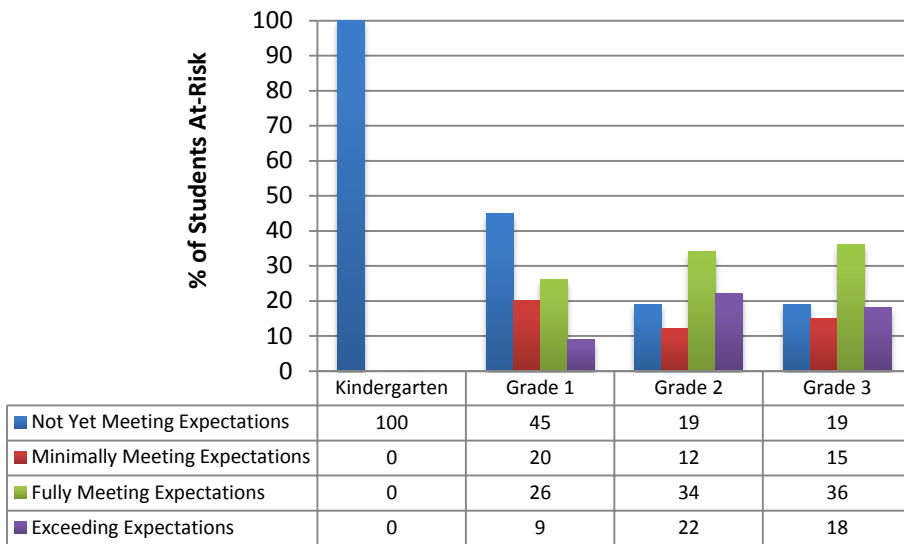


Those students, who continue to be at-risk entering Grade One, are provided with further interventions through the primary grades. As well, many of the schools in the initiative are also implementing Tier 2 literacy interventions through small group reading and writing support, using leveled literacy resources.

By the end of Grade 3, there is a further reduction in the percentage of students still at-risk, from the group who were originally identified in Kindergarten. Many of the students are not only no longer at-risk, but are in fact fully meeting and/or exceeding expectations in reading levels for their age and grade group.

The table below is a compilation of the data which has been collected over the course of the project, and it illustrates the gains that students have made over the four year period.

Change by Grade in Reading Levels of At-Risk Students



The continuing gains may be attributed partly to the increasing experience and expertise level of teachers, in providing this intervention strategy. Presently, the majority of schools involved in the initiative are in vulnerable areas of the city. We anticipate seeing continued gains student reading results as the Early Intervention implementation expands throughout the district.

Tracking student literacy results

As a district we continue to explore approaches to the systematic district-supported collection of data. At this time one consistent source of data available is the language arts letter grades, as reported by teachers on final report cards. We are reviewing that data to identify patterns of achievement and to disaggregate results by gender, ELL, and Aboriginal learners. It continues to be an area of concern and focus for the district to improve results for our Aboriginal learners, who are a small, but vulnerable cohort of the overall student population.

We continue to support Assessment for Learning practices and will be working closely with teacher and administrator associations to develop consistent district-wide assessment tools, and practices for the purpose of informing instruction and intervention strategies. As well, we need to determine an effective means of collating and representing district data on student achievement in literacy, to provide rationale and directions for allocation of funding, resources, and professional development opportunities.

Focus on Aboriginal Learner Success

The district identified several barriers for some of our Aboriginal students in meeting graduation requirements in the humanities. One of these was the low number of students who participated in provincial exams for both English 10 and English 12, and Social Studies 11 and the low number of students completing Planning 10. Secondary schools were asked to create a plan for supporting students in meeting these requirements, and in finding ways to encourage students to attend and write these exams.

Because final exam marks are not available now, we will need to provide clear numbers in the fall, through the website addition to this report.

As well each elementary school with Aboriginal students was provided with a summary of the literacy and numeracy report card information for each student, and asked to work within their school-based team to assess learning needs for these students, with a goal to increasing grade transition rates and improvements in achievement.

Improving School Completion Levels



We offer students several program paths to graduation, including through our secondary schools, alternative programs, VLN-S online program, and our Adult Education Centres. The district's overall Six Year Completion rate continues to increase slightly and was at 83.8% in June 2012. The data is not available for us to track graduation completion beyond six years but we believe it would be considerably higher than the reported six year rate.

Still of concern is the number of Aboriginal students who are successfully graduating each year. In the December 2012 Superintendent's Report on Achievement, it was noted that between 2006 and 2012 the 6 Year Completion Rate of Aboriginal students increased by 10%, with a high of 32.1% in June 2011. Clearly we would like higher graduation rates for these students.

In section 3 above, there was a description of the actions

taken this year to increase student participation in key exams and in the completion of Planning 10 course requirements. As well, the district reviewed the Transcript Verification Record (TVR) for each grade 12 Aboriginal student, to determine which students were in need of targeted support in order to achieve graduation in June 2013. Through a pilot project, additional staffing was provided to focus specifically on providing individualized academic supports and guidance to students in meeting the graduation requirements. The pilot project will inform the model of service delivery which our district Aboriginal Education Enhancement Teachers will provide in the coming school year.

Although results will not be known until August, we are optimistic that a greater number of students will successfully graduate this June. We also are tracking the transition and retention levels of Aboriginal students between grades, as our current information shows that the intake and out-flow of students at each grade tends to not impact total student population numbers. It does, however, affect our ability to provide continuous focused support to individual students.

Supporting Learning and Instructional Practice

In partnership with the teachers' union and the administrators' associations, the district oversees processes related to allocation of the Teacher Collaborative Inquiry Fund. This fund is available to teams of teachers at each school, and across the district, in support of release time to explore inquiry questions and to share ideas/knowledge around effective teaching practices and learning principles. Improved student learning is not necessarily a direct outcome of the inquiry, but is the overall purpose.

Other opportunities for engaging in the inquiry approach to professional development, and for networking, have included:

- Year 3 of the Assessment for Learning series offered by Linda Kaser and Judy Halbert
- Continuing to expand the Learning Commons model in school libraries, as supported by the Teacher-Librarian mentor
- Implementation of the Learning Technology mentor model in support of 61 schools.

A variety of workshop offerings, book clubs, and direct individual support to teachers and staffs, as provided by members of Learning Services staff

Connecting with Community

In partnership with community organizations the District works to support literacy initiatives from a broader perspective. This includes our work through the district's Community School Teams in the school and neighbourhood hubs. As well we participate on the Early Years/WINDOWS and Middle Years/Youth Funders tables, along with representatives from City of Vancouver Social Planning department, Vancouver Coastal Health and the Ministry of Child and Family Development. We are engaged in a number of initiatives with the Vancouver Public Library in support of families and children, around literacy development in the early and middle years, from a public and school library perspective.

The district works with community organizations to support adult learners through outreach programs from the Adult Education centres. These partnerships are a reflection of the district's recognition that students have the greatest chance of success when we align our services, programs and efforts with partnering organizations.

Conclusion

In the coming year we plan to monitor the implementation of the following initiatives in support of student learning and literacy development:

- Expansion of the Early Intervention Initiative to 8 new schools for a total of 47
- Restructuring the district delivery model of academic support for Aboriginal students based on the 2012 -2013 pilot project
- Introduction of the Multi-Interdisciplinary Support Team model to provide timely resources and support to schools in areas related to Resource services, psycho-educational assessments, speech and language assessments/interventions, counselling, and positive behaviour supports.
- Strengthening of district-wide assessment practices and development of district data reporting and collection
- Supporting inquiry-based professional development and providing networking opportunities for staff and students to share their learning and successes

We are developing a website view of our District Plan for Student Learning, and will provide updates to achievement data, such as graduation results, and other resource information.

As a district we look for ways to build on our strengths and to celebrate our successes. We believe that by working together we can make a difference for our students, and we will continue to track our data to determine the extent to which they are achieving success.