

BCeSIS News

Message from the Chair

I would like to welcome back everyone to another school year. We made it through a rough school start up this year with technical challenges experienced province wide. I want to thank everyone for their patience and hard work during the disruptions as the team continues to look at ways to ensure all obstacles to consistent performance have been removed. The Executive committee has been busy meeting frequently to advise and discuss the options presented by the technical teams involved as well as with our partners at the Ministry.

In this issue, despite recent challenges in school start up, a lot of great work continues in the schools to use BCeSIS to support students and teachers in the classroom. SD5 has experienced an improvement in achievement for aboriginal learners. SD33 has invested in teacher training to be able to use data for formative assessment practices in the classroom.

Let's keep up all the good work.

Regards,

Ernie Mannering, SD91

Supporting Aboriginal Learning at SD5

The Southeast Kootenay School District, (SD5), has 21 schools and was an early adopter of BCeSIS over 5 years ago. Since then SD5 has experienced an impact on aboriginal learning. In 2008, results from the annual District Write in Grade 3 demonstrated that the number of aboriginal students recorded as *not yet meeting expectations* dropped from 14 to 9 percent. This trend continued in 2009 dropping to 2 percent. The number *exceeding expectations* in Grade 6 writing has seen an increase from 3% in 2007 to 7% in 2009. This is a considerable achievement considering that the rate in 2009 for all students was 9%.

Brenda Maudie, District Principal of Special Education and Aboriginal Education says the improvements are a result of school-based teams and district administration using the 'potential failures report' to make decisions around adding individual support. The report is available in BCeSIS with preferences set to C- or lower. The list provides staff with key information that once had to be collected manually from report cards. The report lists all courses where students are recorded as C- or lower and allows aboriginal support workers and other members of the school-based team to contact the teacher to ask questions and work together on strategies. More recently they have extended this kind of monitoring to kids given 'I's for *incomplete*.



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Cont'd...Supporting Aboriginal Learning at SD5



Incomplete assignments, tests or assessments can be difficult to follow up on but now, the “I’s list” assists educators in this area.

Teachers who record an “I” for a student are also required to submit an ‘I plan’ that gives recommendations to the student. SD5 has begun an “I Club” that meets at lunch for students who have outstanding I’s on their record. The “I list” is generated primarily for middle schools for both aboriginal and non- aboriginal students.

The teachers and staff are very committed to this initiative, voluntarily giving up their lunch times to meet and provide support to these students.

Brenda says the number of students who are successful from the I Club is extremely high and is the reason staff remain so committed.

SD 5 aims to use BCeSIS to generate reports for their new Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement as well as the district’s achievement contract. Brenda would like to connect with other districts on how they are tracking and monitoring these agreements and contracts. To learn more about SD5’s practices for supporting learning or share your district practices and policies around this issue, Brenda can be contacted via email at brenda.maudie@fc.sd5.bc.ca

“We are barely scratching the surface of what is possible with using data to impact the classroom”

Ruth Wiebe, Assistant Superintendent, Chilliwack School District 33.-below

Around the School Yard

Since adopting BCeSIS, Principal Diane Casault of SD5 Southeast Kootenay says student attendance has been positively impacted. The old system of attendance had been done on paper and frequently the word ‘absent’ would be changed to ‘late’ before it reached office staff. Now students at her school frequently ask ‘has the data gone in yet?’ showing up for class at least early enough so as to not be marked absent.

The office gives a grace period for course changes during the first two weeks in September but after that period, Diane says attendance is noticeably improved and consistent. She says this is because the students know the new routine the staff has developed around using BCeSIS.

Diane has also observed a change in awareness levels due to seeing photos of students attached to their record. “When I am walking through the parking lot I can now make distinctions between names and faces and where those people should be during that period.” Student records are viewed frequently in her day to day routine; the pictures raised her own level of awareness. Access to data can change school culture in unexpected and subtle ways. ■

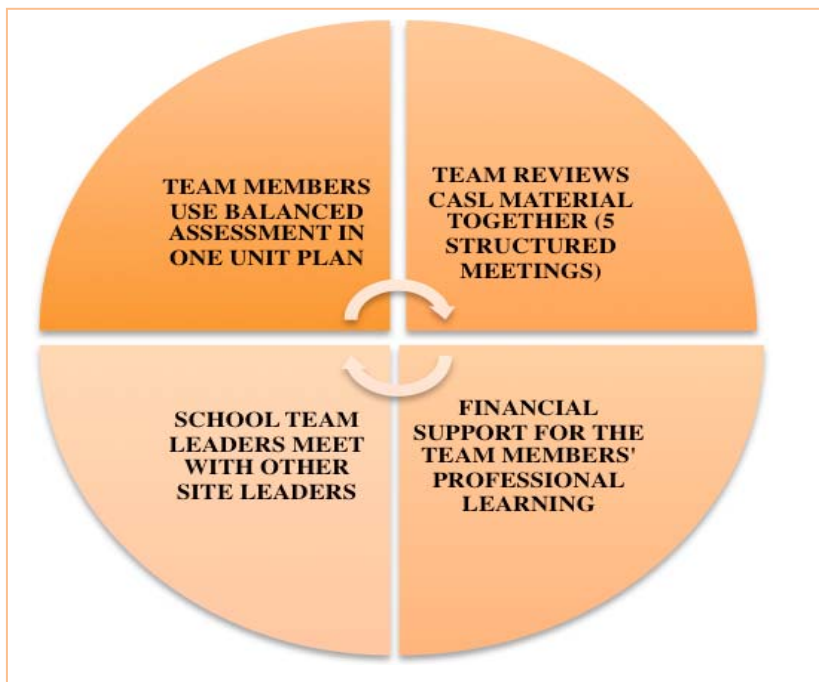
Data for Learning: Lessons from SD33

At the conceptual level, assessment has its share of challenges. When it goes beyond the theoretical to merging classroom and district practice with technology many do not know where to start. Vice Principal David Manuel, Superintendent Corinne McCabe, and Assistant Superintendent Ruth Wiebe of Chilliwack School District decided two years ago that it was time to take up the challenge. They took some guidance from author Mike Schmoker who has written several books and articles on both educational leadership and the use of data for the classroom. He states, “Data can give them the answer to two important questions for teachers: ‘How many students are succeeding in the subjects I teach? And within those subjects, what are the areas of strength or weakness?’ The answers to these two questions set the stage for targeted, collaborative efforts that can pay immediate dividends to achievement gains.”

So Corinne, Ruth and David began combining data captured within BCeSIS with data from the Ministry to create a district culture that values multiple contexts for gathering and utilizing data. One example involved the use of summative data to create a foundation for formative assessment work with a pilot group of classroom teachers. Their strategy went beyond providing data to teachers, to investments in professional leadership and assessment training. They sent teams from ten middle and secondary schools to work with Rick Stiggins in Portland, Oregon, for specialized training in balanced assessment. These teams then shared and interpreted their knowledge with colleagues with reference to classroom, school, district, and Ministry-gathered data. The ongoing goal is to make practical learning regarding assessment of, for, and as learning sustainable.

At the classroom level, balanced assessment practice involves teachers assessing students throughout the semester informally, to determine areas of confusion and areas of strength, and then resolving confusions and mastering concepts before students are tested formally. The issue becomes one of focusing teacher and student energy on concepts that require support.

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Data for Learning: Lessons from SD33

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... The graph (above) is taken from the district's project planning document and refers to their use of *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning* (CASL) training materials. They are encouraged by how teachers in all 10 schools have embraced the initiative. David reported that sustainability is key and can be seen in the teachers who have experienced success with the new practice. Many who did not go to Portland received the training from those who did. Students from one such class who gave feedback on the new practices say they have felt a positive impact because they have been given a chance to improve and know where to focus their learning before going into an exam.

At the district level, an exploration of different data sets identified one area of concern: a dip in results at the intermediate level. Based on the data, the Curriculum Department began working with intermediate teachers to infuse their instruction with assessment for and as learning. An initial 7% increase in Grade 6 students fully meeting expectations on the RAD (Spring, 2010) gives hope that this work will lead to greater success in supporting learning for students. Targeting the implementation through district level data allowed it to be more effective.

Another example of data use involved tracking student results across Grade 4 and 7 FSA through the Grade 10 English Final Exam. Within minutes, it was possible to identify students who had been successful in both of the former assessments but not in the latter, and then to gather information from BCeSIS about their current programming. This holds potential for flagging students who are at risk of dropping out of school, analyzing areas of past success and failure, and then giving that information directly to classroom teachers.

When asked why he supports combining summative assessment data with formative assessment practices, David says, "Children are not motivated by bad marks. Data is meaningless without applying it to the classroom in a targeted way." SD33 applied previous lessons learned from SD23 (Central Okanagan) which has also established a significant data culture within their district. Ruth says, "We are barely scratching the surface of what is possible with using data to impact the classroom."


Four Key Lessons from SD33

KEY #1 Plan to consciously build and establish a data culture. SD33 Formula: Adult Learning training + Data training + Formative Assessment training.

KEY #2 Keep the data simple. You only need to know two things: Which students are failing and what are they struggling with? SD 33 keeps its main goal - to increase graduation rates- always in mind.

KEY #3 Apply the data to the classroom. SD33 recommends formative assessment practices. This allows the child to know where his/her weak points are and work on them before being formally tested.

Key #4 Monitor and Evaluate. Follow up with regular meetings with teachers to provide them with data. Administrators can do the data work while teachers focus on teaching.

Despite recent challenges faced due to cuts to their technology department, Ruth Wiebe says she recently spoke with teachers at the Chilliwack Secondary School and their data work continues to go well. The SD33 team has already shared their templates and strategies with other school districts and educators. If you have any questions or for more details on this initiative, contact David at David.Manuel@sd33.bc.ca 

Update: Who is using BCeSIS?

BCeSIS is currently deployed in 1414 (86.7%) public schools and holds the records for more than 526,773 (90.7%) students in public schools. It also contains records for more than 24,000 (35.6%) students in independent schools in BC. In addition BCeSIS is used by First Nations schools and public schools in the Yukon.

A survey of districts¹ revealed that secondary teachers were the largest user group and that over 90% of them use BCeSIS for recording period attendance and preparation of report cards. Elementary teachers are the second largest group who also use the system for attendance and report cards. Over 90% of counsellors use BCeSIS for course selection and scheduling and accessing student course information. Over the next year, districts predict an increase in use of BCeSIS features for recording student assignments, tracking student interventions, managing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with special needs and using district assessment data to support learning.

¹ Representatives from twenty five districts responded to the survey conducted in January 2010.

We encourage districts to share their stories with others around the province. If you have a district story on data driven decision making or the use of data for learning please send your email to Stephanie.Campbell@gov.bc.ca

Service Management Council Executive Update

The Executive has recently had two of its members move on, Ian Larsson from School District # 69 (Qualicum) and Doug Hogg at School District 5 (Southeast Kootenay).

Doug Hogg will be retiring this fall after a fruitful career in education. He has served as a teacher, an elementary school principal and with the BC Teacher's Federation at different points in his career. His last five years were spent implementing BCeSIS in SD5. He remains passionate about seeing the shifts that can be brought about in education using technology. "There still exists a fear factor, but if you can make technology comfortable for people to use then you will have change."

Ian Larsson will not be going far from his home in Qualicum as he joins the BCeSIS team in Victoria. He is looking forward to providing school district perspectives to the team. He brings a wealth of expertise in eSIS learned over 5 years.

His current focus among many is to work with districts to discuss possibilities of working together to build sustainable practices and partnerships within and between districts.

The Executive plans to fill these vacant positions in November. For more information please contact Ernie Mannering emanner@mail.sd91.bc.ca



Doug Hogg, SD5



Ian Larsson, SD69



An elementary school in Qualicum School District, 69 promotes environmental awareness through composting. Oct 2010.