



Del Van Gorder School Review Report October 2014

Del Van Gorder School
October 2014

School Principal: Angela Magon

Date of Review: October 28/29, 2014

School Review Team: **Simon Blakesley, Director, Student Achievement**
Jesse Jewell, Experiential Education Consultant
John Duclos, Principal, Eliza Van Bibber School

Meetings with the School included:

Teachers
Students
School administration
Support staff
School Council
School Growth Planning Team

School Context

Del Van Gorder (DVG) School is a large, well-maintained K-12 facility, located in Faro, YT - a former mining town 360km northeast from Whitehorse. The school once housed around 400 students, which is now the approximate population of the town itself. The current student population is 60, which is an increase over the previous year. The school also houses the Yukon College Campus and the Public Library.

DVG is in many ways the backbone of the Faro community, and there is a strong desire to keep it a community-accessible school. The school has not traditionally had many English Language Learner (ELL) students; however, it has recently taken on 10 ELL students from six different countries, which is 19% of the student population. Unlike other schools in the Yukon, DVG is not formally connected to a First Nations Council, although there are ten First Nation students at the school this year (19% of the student population). Approximately 15 students at the school are also on IEP (individualized education plans), student learning or behaviour plans.

The school is staffed with 7.5 full time equivalency (FTE) teachers. There is also a 0.5 FTE Principal/counsellor and several support staff (including 1.75 FTE Educational Assistants, a Librarian Clerk, and an Admin Assistant). The current Principal is in her third year at the school, and seven new teachers have been hired over the past two years.

DVG Data Profile

DVG average absence (Days) for the school year 2013/2014, 2012/2013 and 2011/2012:

RU	School	2013/2014	2012/2013	2011/2012
R	Del Van Gorder School	21	21	22

(Individual grade attendance data is not included in this report due to N<10 for each grade from K-12)

Del Van Gorder School Kindergarten EYE & Boehm 2014 Spring Results

EYE Spring 2014

EYE Spring 2014 Responsive Tiered Instruction (RTI) Category

EYE Spring 2014 (RTI)	NC	CI	NI	ALL
Del Van Gorder School	67%	22%	11%	9

EYE Spring School	ASE			SOC			COG			LNG			PHYFINE			PHYGROSS		
	NC	CI	NI	NC	CI	NI	NC	CI	NI	NC	CI	NI	NC	CI	NI	NC	CI	NI
DVG	89%	11%	0%	67%	22%	11%	89%	11%	0%	89%	0%	11%	89%	11%	0%	78%	22%	0%

ASE_DL *Developmental level for **Awareness of Self and Environment***

SOC_DL *Developmental level for **Social Skills and Approaches to Learning***

COG_DL *Developmental level for **Cognitive Skills***

LNG_DL *Developmental level for **Language and Communication***

PHYFINE_DL *Developmental level for **Physical Development - Fine Motor***

PHYGROSS_DL *Developmental level for **Physical Development - Gross Motor***

Boehm Spring 2014

Boehm Spring 2014	NC	CI	NI	ALL
Del Van Gorder School	11%	44%	44%	9

Code	Description
NC	No Concern
CI	Classroom Intervention
NI	Needs Investigation

DVG BCP exam marks report for the school year 2013/2014¹:

In 2013-14, DVG students wrote the following British Columbia provincial exams.

DVG BCP Exams	Marks range	Yukon BCP Exams	Marks range
English 10 Foundations of Math 10 Science 10 Social Studies 11 English 12	71-88%	Apprenticeship Math 10 English 10 English 10 First Peoples Fondements et Mathqs 10 Foundations of Math 10 Francais Langue Premiere 10 Science 10 Sciences 10 Civic Studies 11 Sciences Humaines 11 Social Studies 11 Communications 12 English 12 Francais Langue Premiere 12 Francais Langue Seconde 12 Yukon FN Studies 12	50-77%

Note: In all subjects where DVG students wrote BCP exams, the DVG average was higher than the Yukon average for that subject

¹ Marks are masked due to concerns related to only one DVG student writing some exams. Indicating the percentage mark for a course clearly identifies the student, hence the range of marks is presented in order to ensure privacy

Norms and Culture:

Characteristics:

Continuously improving schools are socially and culturally inclusive with high expectations for each learner. A focus on continuous improvement is evident.

Observations of the Team:

- There is a supportive staff who work together and help one another, sharing ownership of the students at Del Van Gorder School (DVG)
- The Team heard from students that they know their teachers care about them and want to do their best in order to help them be successful
- There is an open and participatory culture at DVG: students have input into behavioural guidelines and can participate democratically with regards to how the school functions
- High standards for behaviour and academics are evident at DVG, and the Team heard from staff that this culture can be a challenge for new students
- Students with whom the Team spoke were adamant that there are no bullies at DVG, and there is a mentoring atmosphere where students help one another across the grades
- The Team notes that the recommendation from the previous review to participate in the REM has been capitalized upon: With respect to student behaviour and responsibility, DVG students have been identified at REM events as being leaders for other students
- A “no-bell” approach helps to contribute to a calm school environment that, while relaxed, has a strong focus on learning
- All classes, rooms, offices, and other parts of the school are clearly labelled in both English and French by students
- The team heard from senior students that, while their teachers work with them in high school ways, at times, not all teachers interact with them in age-appropriate or high-school ways

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Ensure that all staff are cognizant of the needs of high school students, and interact with them in age-appropriate ways that make them feel distinctive from elementary students
- Continue the very strong efforts made since the last review to create a culture at DVG as a welcoming school for all children and community members
- As suggested in the 2011 Review, continue to make progress in fostering a supportive learning culture that deploys creative ways to maximize student learning

School and Community

Characteristics: Continuously improving schools build a shared commitment to success for each learner. The school collaborates with parents, students, school council, First Nations and community to support student learning. Ongoing parent/community involvement is embedded in school culture and the school communicates about progress and challenges in multiple ways.

Observations of the Team:

- Multiple communication channels are used to share information with parents and the community: mass emails to parents, newsletters, the school website, advertising in the local paper are examples of the ways that DVG communicates with stakeholders
- The team observed a close working relationship with the school administration, staff, and School Council. The School Growth Planning Team provides the venue for stakeholders to share in the work of helping DVG continue to grow
- There is an open community presence in the school: parents and students were observed reading together in the front foyer of the school before the start of school, and then accompanying their child to their class at the start of the school day
- The school is working with Yukon College and developing shared programming and resources, and staff members sit on the Yukon College campus committee
- Staff members possessing distinct skill-sets (Music, Drama, Skating, Woodworking, Canoeing/Outdoor pursuits, etc.) have been hired at DVG, and bring a wide-range of talents and perspectives to the school in order to enrich what is offered to students
- A school-wide expectation is that teachers will invite a minimum of two community members in their classroom during the school year. Conversely, staff members contribute

to the community by participating on the Volunteer Fire Department and taking on other community roles

- In response to community concerns identified in the 2011 School Review, the school now offers a lunch program for all students in the clean, well-equipped kitchen
- While DVG makes strong efforts to include Yukon First Nations perspectives, The Team recognizes that Faro is the only Yukon community without its own local First Nations Council, and that this can pose a challenge when staff attempt to offer First Nations teachings in the school

Recommendations for moving forward:

- As the DVG staff's expertise and ability to offer more in terms of programs and activities continues to grow, continue to ensure that the knowledge and skills of community members are included in order to keep the strong community connection with the school
- Continue to seek ways to include Elders and other First Nations resource people from various communities (e.g. Carmacks and Ross River) in order to help all DVG students make connections to the land and further incorporate First Nations teachings at the school

School Organization

Characteristics: Continuously improving schools organize structures, actions, and interventions to ensure success for each learner. Work in the school is coherent and aligned to focus on improvement. Actions and interventions include effectively differentiating resources, time and professional development to get results. The Department supports the school and makes connections across the Territory to build capacity.

Observations of the Team:

- DVG is a well-organized and well-maintained school that is equipped with a kitchen, community library, science lab, and a recently upgraded Industrial Education lab as one example of a specialized subject-area room
- Through changes in timetabling there is a revitalized high school program that offers many courses on a rotational basis, such as Physics 11/12, Chemistry 11/12, Calculus 12, History 12, Law 12, Psychology 12, Geography 12, and other applied skills courses in addition to core courses

- There is a large amount of theme-based work clearly displayed at the school: Examples include student poetry and writing, Halloween art, and other examples of student learning. In order to support student learning more broadly, a wide range of clubs/activities are also offered
- The DVG staff is very dynamic and have a wide-range of skill-sets that they willingly bring to their work. Students benefit from staff members who share their talents in multiple ways; high school teachers support their students using Moodle and a blended-learning approach using mini-lessons, labs, and group work
- The Team observed that there is a large amount of very well-maintained outdoor education equipment at the school, though heard that the equipment may not be as frequently utilized as students and staff would like it to be
- On the student-led tour, the team observed that there is a large amount of storage space at DVG. While the school does have a very well-equipped and organized outdoor education equipment room, the team also observed some rooms where there appears to be a clutter of older equipment, completed student projects, and supplies left by previous staff
- PLCs (professional learning communities) are at a beginning phase and are beginning to be organized at DVG. The team heard from staff members that PLCs need to be given more time to meet on a regular basis for them to impact teaching and learning throughout all grade divisions.

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Work with the Department of Education to build capacity at the school with respect to required training and certifications that would allow greater use of the outdoor education resources, as well as the wood shop at the school
- Work with the Experiential Education Consultant at the Yukon Department of Education to plan for the sustained use of outdoor education resources throughout the year as a vehicle for learning. The use of local resources near to the school (lakes, campgrounds, cabins) may be helpful in achieving this aim
- Continue to work towards connecting the First Nations Councils of Ross River and Carmacks to the development of the outdoor education programming in the school. This would assist in fostering a positive relationship between the school and the First Nations Communities.
- Continue the process of identifying materials to be removed from the school (as was done with the science lab) as a means of better organizing and utilizing space

- Dedicate frequent and sequential meeting times for staff to conduct PLC work in order to ensure that students and staff will benefit from this initiative. Each grade division should have an agenda that contributes to the school wide goals which could be monitored on a regular basis.

School Processes and Progress

Characteristics: Continuously improving schools take responsibility for improving outcomes for students. They use evidence to guide decisions and actions and have processes in place to collectively monitor progress and make adjustments in key areas of their work. They demonstrate improvement over time – for individual students, groups of students, and the school.

Observations of the Team:

- The Team appreciated the diligence of the School Growth Planning Team to communicate through a 4-page summary the response to the 2011 Review recommendations, and share areas of growth which they have identified
- The Team observed that data are being used to inform instruction: School Wide Writes, DART, and BCP results are used as evidence to guide teaching for individual students, understanding that there are limitations due to small enrolment numbers
- As recommended in the 2011 Review, a greater focus on academic achievement was indicated: When the Team reviewed DVG’s BC Provincial Exam results, it was noticed that DVG students outperformed the Territorial average across all subjects identified in the data profile on Page 4 of this report
- The Team heard that staff members are interested in building profiles/files for students in order to understand them better as they advance through the grades, and are also interested in the development of common assessment practices along a continuum (e.g. Sandra Herbst’s model)
- The team heard from students that they are shown the School Growth Plan once it is written, though senior students expressed the desire to have more input at the front-end of the School Growth Plan’s development
- In order to strengthen the focus on literacy in the School Growth Plan, the school timetables 100 minutes/day of instructional time across grades to support this goal

- The SGP goal of social responsibility is discussed with students at school-wide assemblies. Staff members actively model both pro-social behavior as well as examples of improvable behaviour in order to make this goal more tangible for students

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Identify what would constitute a profile/file for students and a process on how they would be used to inform planning and instruction for students as they progress through the grades. This process could be aligned in part to assist in the achievement of the school's growth planning goals
- Continue to use a variety of data sources as a means of informing instruction, identifying needs (individual and group), developing robust programming, and celebrating successes at DVG
- As a school-wide initiative, develop a writing continuum that can be used by students to gain consistent more results across all grades
- Develop as a team a writing continuum for the school that can be used by students in the assessment for learning and as learning in order that there is a consistent focus on writing throughout the school

In conclusion

The Review Team would like to commend the staff and community for the warm, caring, and welcoming academic atmosphere that has been actively nurtured at DVG since the last review. It is evident that the development of supportive relationships between the school and the community has received focused attention over the past three years, and is commented upon and appreciated by all stakeholders with whom the team met. The Review Team feels that DVG is now well-positioned to continue its academic and experiential growth in a sustainable way.

Reflecting on the 2011 Review, the current staff, administration, and School Growth Planning Team are to be commended for acting upon the numerous recommendations from 2011. The School Growth Planning Team is encouraged to continue this momentum, further defining Del Van Gorder School as they act upon successes and positive growth in order to build programs that are exciting and academically robust for all students.

Practices to share:

- The focus on recruiting staff who bring additional skills/talents/certifications to their work
- The creative use of timetabling to deliver a broader range of programming that was previously offered at DVG
- The student support system that contributes to the positive, caring, and helpful atmosphere
- The supportive working relationship that has been fostered between the school community and its members

- The lunch program that meets the needs of students and parents

Considerations for the Department of Education

- Consider the allocation of administration time to a K-12 rural school such as DVG, given the large amount of organization that is required in order to be successful in such a context