

In response to questions in an email from Trustee Fraser and in an email from Trustee Parrott following the September 22, 2021 meeting of the Student Learning and Well-being Committee, staff offers the following responses in blue font:

## Trustee Fraser

- 1.) We know our district's intent is for students to graduate within 5 years of starting grade 8 and have data for 5-year completion rates. However not all students graduate within 5 years, especially students in the identified sub-populations. How do we support students on their graduation journey if they have not graduated after 5 years? Can we assess the impact of district supports by looking at the 6-year completion rates, including for sub-populations?

Counsellors work very closely with all students on graduation requirement completion. If students do not complete graduation requirements in 5 years, there are different options students can choose:

- return for an additional year provided they do not turn 19 prior to July 1<sup>st</sup>
- pursue completion of courses at programs available through colleges, adult education, VLN

The District can track student's progress including student sub-population using their Personal Education Number (PEN) provided they are accessing support programs within the province. However, student sub-population data is often masked due to privacy so this analysis would require sensitivity on how the information is shared.

## Trustee Parrott

- 1.) p.8 – what is “operational equity”?  
- The first paragraph under GENERAL NOTES isn't clear. It says that we used only “masked data”. Shouldn't that read “unmasked data”. If not, why not?

The concept of operational equity has been emphasized by the Ministry of Education in recent years. With respect to the FESL report, the concept of operational equity refers of differences between demographic, achievement, and social/emotional indicators between sub-populations and the aggregate for the entire population analyzed for the report. A higher degree of operational equity would correspond to smaller gaps in the indicators between sub-populations and the aggregate for the entire population.

The sentence in general notes should read 'unmasked data' – staff have now corrected the report and the report can be found on the [VSB website here](#)

- 2.) p.12 – How can we tell if the differences between years and between District/Province are significant? In other words, could the differences be just a standard error?

The report identifies trends and does not make any reference to the statistical significance of these trends as that would be outside the scope of the report and the expertise of staff.

As an example, gr 4 reading levels on the FSA are declining; the report suggests three possible explanations – but does not contain an analysis of statistical significance.

- 3.) p. 13 – A “significant performance gap between diverse learners and all residents”. Can we actually make that statement? How is significant defined? With so few students taking this test, can we say the data is reliable?

There are two descriptors used to describe gaps in operational equity – ‘moderate’ and ‘significant’. These are qualitative descriptors selected by staff to represent quantitative differences in outcomes. Moderate gap refers to a difference of between 5 and 20% of a particular sub-population meeting a criteria, a significant gap is greater than 20% of a sub-population meeting a specific criteria. E.g., If 83% of all grade 4 students are meeting or exceeding expectations for reading, and 61% of diverse learners are meeting or exceeding this is described as a ‘significant’ performance gap.

These terms are somewhat arbitrary; however, there was considerable discussion and more in-depth analysis provided at the stakeholder engagement level.

Smaller cohorts that don’t fully represent a sub-population could raise issues of reliability and validity that are beyond the scope of the report.

The statement regarding the performance gap is a summary statement in relation to performance on the gr 4 and 7 FSA and the gr 10 literacy assessment (which all students must write in order to graduate). One source of corroborating evidence for the summary statement in the report is an analysis of report card data that aligns with FSA results the results of the Grad assessment.

- 4.) p. 14 – what additional sources of evidence about student reading performance is being contemplated?

The data that Literacy Enhancement Teachers (LETs) already collect regarding the reading progress of students to whom they provide service will be disaggregated by ELL, Special Needs and Indigenous Learners. Additionally, LETS will also collect qualitative evidence from a sampling of their students with several assessments of progress that occur between their baseline and final assessments. District staff are also looking at the availability and potential of district-standard literacy (reading) assessments that could be used in schools.

- 5.) p. 16 – 17 – REPORT CARDS. What is the purpose of this section? Is it to demonstrate that in fact teachers are pretty good at assessing their students? Or, is it to demonstrate the importance of FSA? What can be reliably said about these comparisons?

As part of the work done with the stakeholder working group two additional sources of data were explored:

- Data pertaining to outcomes for ELL students
- Report card data

On its own, report card data is a rich and valuable source of data as it represents a longitudinal and comprehensive assessment of many aspects of student learning. For the working group staff analyzed report card data and compared outcomes from report card data to FSA and GLA results. There is a high degree of alignment between the operational equity gaps seen in the FSA and GLA results and the operational equity gaps apparent in report card data.

- 6.) p. 23 – is one of the district’s determinant of success, the number of students who attend post-secondary institutions? What about the students who are working in the trades? How do we assess students contentment, life long learning abilities, mental wellness, etc. How many books to students read for enjoyment after they have finished formal education? Aren’t these questions as important when determining our success?

Post secondary transition rates is one of the Ministry's requirements to be reviewed as part of the report. Trades, colleges, and universities are included as part of the data set. Other data sets can be included as part of the data reviewed by the District.

- 7.) p. 24 – The three elements of MOE Mental Health in Schools are disturbing to me. It seems that at least two of these elements are dealing with symptoms of mental stress, without dealing with the causes. In other words, adults are being asked to fix themselves in order to tolerate the stressors.

A strength-based approach is a key principle of the mental health strategy. This approach emphasizes the strengths, capabilities and resources of students, staff, classrooms, schools and communities. This perspective replaces an emphasis on problems, vulnerabilities, and deficits while the individual student's risk and protective factors continue to be addressed.