



# Creating the Conditions for Secondary School Effectiveness

**Team Members:**  
**Dr. Jean Hewitt,**  
**Dr. Helen Bochar,**  
**Cindy Harris,**  
**Alana Murray,**  
**Jacqui Traverse-Thomas**





# Report

**Title of Report:** Creating the Conditions for Secondary School Effectiveness

**Board:** Bluewater District School Board

**Name of Team Contact:** Mark Ozorio (formerly Deb Kaufman), Principal and /or Alana Murray, Superintendent of Secondary Education

**Email:** Alana\_murray@bwdsb.on.ca

**Phone Number:** 519-363-2014

**Team Members:** Dr. Jean Hewitt, Dr. Helen Bochar, Cindy Harris, Alana Murray, Jacqui Traverse-Thomas

**Essential Question:**

(Examples: What is the impact of using web-casts for professional development for teachers? How can student achievement data be used with literacy teams to inform instruction)

How are the learning conditions required for students, staff and administrators in a secondary school to improve achievement and close the learning gaps for all students created and sustained over time?

**Background:**

(Statements on why or how you came to study this problem issue)

District data for secondary schools was static or declining for past three years. A model for secondary school effectiveness and instructional review was being piloted to address conditions that would be required to increase graduation rates from 72% to 85% by 2010-2011 and make instruction more relevant and increase student engagement.

**Data Collection Methods and Analysis:**

(Discuss how you carried out your Research project, and how the results were analyzed. Provide timelines, strategies, processes used. Provide enough detail that another school/board would be able to replicate your process).

The Secondary School review took place on November 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 2008. Its purpose was to provide the staff members of the school with feedback that could help them strengthen program delivery, build their professional learning community and increase student achievement.

The school has made gains in recent months: for example, the number of Academic students reaching Level 3 or higher on the Grade 9 EQAO Math Testing (2008) increased 5% over the previous year. However, the number of students graduating from the school is declining and the Literacy scores remain quite flat- standing in 2006 at 81%, in 2007 at 82% and in 2008 at 82%. Also, staff report a chronic absentee problem, particularly amongst Grades 9 and 10 students. In doing a comprehensive school review that looks at all classrooms, grades and subjects, the key focus is on the indicators of exemplary programming in evidence during the observation period. The indicators are clustered in four key areas:

### **2.1 Classroom Climate**

Factors which set the emotional/social conditions necessary for optimal learning to take place include:

- positive interaction between student and teacher,
- clarity of expectations in regard to conduct in the room, and
- engagement of the learners in a dynamic way.

### **2.2 Use of Space, Time and Resources**

Factors which provide the more concrete conditions necessary for optimal learning to take place include:

- flexibility of scheduling,
- the effective use and length of instructional time,
- the accessibility of resources,
- the physical organization of the classroom, and
- the appropriate allocation of resource staff.

### **2.3 Instructional Strategies**

The factors that are known to increase the learning of all students (Universal Design) include:

- focus on the curriculum expectations,
- use of a wide range of teaching strategies,
- involvement of students in collaborative learning and ownership of their own learning,
- linking of classroom work to prior knowledge and experience,
- fostering of thinking skills, and
- modification/adaptation of curriculum to meet individual needs.

### **2.4 Assessment Strategies**

The factors that have been shown to create higher standards of achievement include:

- recognition that assessment is part of a continuous coaching/ feedback process,
- use of a variety of assessment strategies and the development of individual student profiles,
- the provision of opportunities for students to retry tests and improve their work, and
- recognition that assessment must be used to determine whether program modifications and adaptations are actually working.

The Review Team was selected by the BWDSB to complete the review of Secondary School. The Team was provided with various documents that contained data on such things as Literacy and Math results, graduation rates, special needs students, and credit accumulation. In addition, the Principal shared some of the school planning process material, including the school effectiveness self-assessment completed by the staff earlier this year.

The Review Team had short meetings with the Principal and Vice-Principal on both days to learn more about the history of the school, its community and its extra-curricular programs. The school administrators also clarified information in the various documents shared with the Review team.

For each day of the review, the Review Team broke into two small teams in order to ensure that as many classrooms were observed as possible and to minimize the disruption of having too many visitors walk into lessons in progress. In addition to their observations of the program indicators and the literacy instruction across the curriculum, the Review Team members looked at student work and spoke with staff members and students about the teaching/learning environment and processes.

On the final day of the review, the Review Team met with the staff for a feedback session. The secondary reviewer provided a framework for the school improvement process and the primary reviewer provided specific feedback on what had been observed by the team members in relation to the program indicators described earlier. The Superintendent spoke about the follow-up that will be done upon receipt of the report and recommendations during the latter part of November.

### **Results and Findings:**

(Provide a summary of your results based on the data and observations. What did you find out about your essential question(s)?

Relate your summary to the indicators of success that you stated for your project. Describe any relevant literature that helped in formation of your essential question(s), rationale, or methods. Include a sample of the tools used to collect data).

We are in the initial stages of this research project. This is a three year project and we will be monitoring the school results over time.

**Reflections and Action:**

(Provide thoughts on how this research will affect student learning/teacher practice in your school/board).

We continue to provide program department support and work through the change process with the pilot secondary school. They are in the initial stages of unpacking the review report and establishing a school steering committee to develop a school plan to implement the recommendations. The lessons learned through the implementation of the School Effectiveness Framework in the district elementary schools would indicate that they can be successfully applied in the secondary school context.

**Contributions to MISA Professional Network Centre:**

(Discuss how this research has contributed to the knowledge and understanding of the MISA Professional Network Centre).

Very little school improvement research exists with a secondary focus so this is new territory and there are lot of opportunity for learning and growth.

**Suggestions for Future Research:**

(Provide some ideas on what can be done in this area of research in the future).

We will continue to work towards developing strategies that assist secondary school in closing learning gaps and improving student achievement.