



Uplands Elementary School

2012-2013 NOII Inquiry Case Study

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Uplands Elementary Coast Mountains School District 82

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School Context

Uplands Elementary is a K-6 school with a population of just under 300 students. It is one of eleven elementary schools in this northwestern British Columbia school district. Uplands is located in Terrace, the largest of five communities that comprise the district. Uplands has a reasonably stable population of predominantly English speaking families and a low percentage of Aboriginal students. Terrace has traditionally been a resource based community, but has suffered two sawmill closures. The district has experienced several school closures and reconfigurations and declining enrolment.

This is the first involvement in a network inquiry for four of the five team members. Their teaching assignments were Grades 1, 2, 4/5, and 5.

School Inquiry and Action

School Question: How can we decrease anxieties related to writing and increase the quality of writing output, especially for Aboriginal students?

Scanning: The whole team completed a similar impromptu writing assignment with their class. At a later date the team came together to look at the writing samples, marked them against the Performance Standards, and then discussed their findings. The scanning for information not only came in the form of data collected, but also from class and individual conferencing with students.

Students appeared to be having difficulty with meta-cognition and self-regulating their emotions. Children at Uplands seem to have increased anxiety and we felt that they may need to be taught strategies in order to help them function better in the classroom setting. Writing is an area in which we had observed increased levels of stress and/or anxiety.

Hunch: The situation for our learners: We thought there seemed to be increasing pressure placed on students to perform. We wondered if children were missing the opportunity to enjoy writing because they were worried about “what we want?”

Strategies

New professional learning: As colleagues, and with First Peoples Principles of Learning as our guide, we collaborated and implemented strategies from Adrienne Gear’s Writing Power. We became familiar with and used

anchor books that have Aboriginal content for our lessons. We also participated in the school's book club that was based on reading Ten Mindful Minutes by Goldie Hawn.

Taking action: We met four times over the course of the school year. After the initial school-wide write we evaluated the writing and determined the aspects of the performance standards on which to focus. With our students, we discussed self-awareness of one's emotions, how to handle negative thoughts and emotions, and selected strategies to reduce anxiety. Students also used the Performance Standards to set goals and self-evaluate. We provided the criteria for writing tasks and made it accessible to the students. Using the writing performance standards students could self-evaluate their performance and set their own goals.

School Findings

Our baseline and final evidence:

1. Writing – school wide write using performance standards for personal-impromptu writing. After our final school wide write and collaborative marking session it was clearly evident that the majority of students had made sizeable gains in their writing.
2. Anxiety – feelings journal entry on the topic of writing. Looking back at how the class changed we realized that they do understand what it means to be self-regulated. They have a better understanding of what tools to use to get themselves to a place of self-regulation. The classes seem more cohesive, yet we now know that learning about self-regulation and having the ability to implement those strategies is a continuous process.

Fall Personal/ Impromptu Writing – 24 students

Aspect	Not Yet	Meets (Min)	Fully Meets	Exceeds
Meaning	0	8	13	3
Style	0	7	17	0
Form	0	3	20	1
Conventions	0	11	13	0
OVERALL	0	6	18	0

Spring Personal/ Impromptu Writing – 24 students

Aspect	Not Yet	Meets (Min)	Fully Meets	Exceeds
Meaning	0	1	12	11
Style	0	3	15	6
Form	0	1	15	8
Conventions	0	5	18	1
OVERALL	0	1	16	7

Plans for 2012-2013

We would like to continue to work collaboratively, yet narrow our focus if we do an inquiry. We found our plan encompassing writing strategies, Aboriginal content, anxiety/ self-regulation, and self-assessment was very broad. There is interest in continuing to develop in each of these areas. We will have some staff changes as well as changes in allocations of support for students.

Reflections

Success for the adults

- Collaboration: Really enjoyed working together a group
- One goal: we were able to stay focused
- One track for the whole school: Believe it created a greater change for the students
- Great examples: collaboration created opportunities for sharing lessons and experiences.
- All students belong to all adults
- Creates a spiral of excitement: more adults in the building are becoming excited about collaboration and interested in the inquiry process
- Increased relationship building
- Data driven and evidence helps clarify purpose

- Scanning and data drove the process and the professional learning

Success for the students

- Students made gains in their learning, standards have improved
- Enjoyed using anchor books
- Constant reinforcement of use of criteria and focus
- All class having a common language
- Cross grade levels: buddy learning partners, kids becoming teachers, cross class collaboration
- Kids have become excited and engaged
- Use of criteria and aim of lessons has reduced anxiety, they have become more organized.

