

# 2012-2013 AESN Inquiry Case Study



**School Name:** Nisga'a Elementary School  
**District:** #92 Nisga'a  
**Inquiry Team Members:** Carey Stewart, Derek Azak, Sara Beardsell, Lena Griffin, Teresa McMillan, and Yvette McMillan

**AEEA Goal Area:** Literacy

## Question/Focus:

**VIU Question:** How can a community of learners focused on collaborative inquiry and formative assessment practices enhance student literacy learning while celebrating Aboriginal languages and cultures?

## School Question:

**Primary (K/1):** Will the use of Talking Tables and A/B Partner Talk improve literacy engagement as measured by the VIU Engagement Tool?

## Scanning

In the fall, teachers attempted to address the writing learning outcomes identified, but some teachers found it difficult to incorporate specifically focused lessons in addition to implementing a new reading program's expectations. Teachers identified difficulties meeting outcomes for both reading and writing, although some outcomes overlapped, such as speaking in sentences during conversations, developing stamina and engagement during conversations and in the intermediate grades focusing on details in both oral and written responses. There was some improvement noted in writing in the results of the Spring Writing assessment. One early primary teacher (Lean) noted that she focused on the writing question, but most teachers felt improvement was incidental.

Teacher learning around engaging in the inquiry cycle was noted by most of the participants.

## Focus

Primary teachers (K/1) focused on oral language and increasing student engagement.

Primary/Intermediate teachers (Grades 2-6) focused on writing style (descriptive words, sentence variety).

After participating in the inquiry cycle, teachers were able to identify the importance of using data in informing instruction. As well, teachers were beginning to develop a greater understanding of the importance of teacher and student modeling of tasks. Smaller sized lessons were providing greater results, and giving more time to tasks, with teacher and peer feedback incorporated into the actual writing time led to higher achievement results. Teachers became more aware of specifically meeting individual needs and conferencing with individual students to lead them forward respectfully.

## **Hunch**

Primary Teachers (K/1) believe that providing increased opportunities for students to engage in oral language will lead to increased student literacy learning and engagement. Both primary and intermediate teachers have determined that more practice is needed with oral language in order to develop writing style and student confidence. Oral and written skills should be enhanced by developing and co-constructing criteria.

Both primary and intermediate teachers are learning and developing confidence around the implementation of AFL strategies. They are willing to re-address developing criteria in the coming year.

## **New professional learning**

As a school-wide learning team, adult learners will investigate more deeply the BC writing performance standards (Personal Writing – Style) and the use of Assessment for Learning, specifically using learning intentions and criteria when working with students writing tasks.

## **Taking action**

Resources were purchased and given to staff. Team members met regularly with VIU coaches, but a lack of TOC's inhibited the learning. Both administrative and teaching team members did their best, but meetings lacked cohesiveness as topics were addressed several times, teacher thinking was not shared across the school and in-depth learning for educators was not realized. Teachers were able to participate in separate primary or intermediate meetings and assessed writing samples according to the BC performance standards. They were able to use information gathered to inform instruction.

## **Checking**

A difference was made for the adult learners, and that is a good start. Educators became more aware of how their actions influenced the learning that took place in the classrooms. It was a difficult year, with a number of unforeseen circumstances. Teachers became more aware of the importance of the information held within the data. Data is viewed with a different lens – it is no longer seen as a “score” but rather a collection of information about the learner and the focus is not on low or high scores, but what needs to be taught next for that individual learner. Teachers felt successful and more comfortable using data.

## **Reflections/Advice**

Learning is about steps forward, and the staff moved forward in their understanding and changing their mindsets around assessment and its purpose. There was not as great an effect on student learning as we had hoped, but in this case, the changes will happen – teachers have started their learning journey and are determined to continue. Teachers are asking themselves important questions around inquiry.

***EVERY learner crossing the stage with dignity, purpose and options.***