



## 2012-2013 AESN Inquiry Case Study

**School Name:** Thornhill Elementary School

**District:** #82 Coast Mountain School District

**Inquiry Team Members:** Bill Leniuk, Lisa MacBean, Donna Rivet, Susan Rusch, Karen Ting, Lois Yeast

**AEEA Goal Area:** Literacy

### Question/Focus:

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:

To what extent will an increased focus on criteria and descriptive feedback improve Aboriginal students' writing as measured by the BC Performance Standard for Personal Writing?

### Scanning

Educators and students both noticed an improved engagement in writing, and both groups perceived that they were highly successful in improving outcomes. Teachers were extremely focused on providing more scaffolding for students by the use of learning intentions and criteria. Many of the educators explored using feedback, rather than grades, and implemented some peer assessment strategies.

### Focus

Using the BC performance standards as an assessment tool helped educators assess what learning needed to happen, and created the ability for teachers to scaffold each step of the process. School-wide results indicated a need for increased student focus on sentence variety, powerful vocabulary, developing strong conclusions and the use of transition words. Using the Rainbow tools and the BC performance standards allowed our teachers to connect assessment and student learning. Teachers were using assessment to move the students forward.

### Hunch

Teachers had used the BC performance standards the previous year to determine needs in writing. They knew that they had started a learning journey, but needed to continue to focus because they had experienced success in connecting assessment to student learning. Teachers wanted to develop a greater understanding of AFL strategies and were comfortable in shifting teaching practices in writing. They also believed that if they increased the use of Aboriginal resources students would be able to make deeper cultural connections that are necessary for developing powerful writing skills. They wanted writing to be self-regulated, and a skill celebrated by the students.

## **New professional learning**

As a school-wide team adults investigated more deeply the formative assessment strategies of using learning intentions, criteria and feedback. They focused on teaching the students, rather than teaching a 'program'. This in turn led to a cycle of more student engagement leading to greater feelings of teacher success and teacher engagement, which led to more student engagement.

## **Taking action**

Sharing across schools and districts helped teachers remain motivated. It gave an additional sense of purpose to moving forward and helped ensure that student evidence was pertinent and demonstrated AFL strategies.

Educators participated in Learning Team Meetings supported by VIU coaches that focused on -reflection/sharing of "What's working" and "What's next"

-book talks around Aboriginal literature developed awareness of appropriate text

-analyzing student evidence of student learning related to the use of criteria and feedback helped teachers understand the power of AFL strategies

-sharing of research and texts to support learning

Educators and students felt successful because they had evidence that they had improved.

## **Checking**

We are positive that there has been improvement and our evidence is available on the Rainbow and BC performance standards. Students monitored their own improvements through self, peer and teacher assessments. Data available from VIU c/o Dr. Paige Fisher.

## **Reflections/Advice**

As educators we have shown that we are able to make thoughtful, deliberate changes to practice in order to improve student learning outcomes. Our students were engaged, both intellectually and socially-emotionally, around improving writing outcomes. Although we will continue to include writing in our focus, we need to move to the broader focus of literacy. This will enable us to focus both on reading and writing skill development.

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