



2012-2013 AESN Inquiry Case Study

School Name: WL McLeod Elementary
District: #91 Nechako Lakes

Question/Focus

How will a focus on developing oral language through interactive modeling, kinesthetic and visual cues impact literacy skills?

Scanning

We were noticing that students were struggling to express themselves articulately, were misinterpreting what instructions or information communicate, and were sometimes unaware of what they are really being asked.

After a year of focusing on implementing strategies to improve our students' oral language skills, teachers have noticed the following:

Intermediate

Students have definitely grown in confidence and skill with oral presentations but there is lots of room for further growth. Before there can be even more improved oral language and literacy learning, the emotional safety of the learning environments in all intermediate classes is in need of improvement so students can take risks with strategies teachers were trying to implement.

Primary

Students are more successful in both French and English with oral language skills. They are more confident, more willing to take risks and are more able to speak articulately with each other and the adults.

Focus

We focused on developing oral language through the use of visual cues modeling and kinesthetic cues, and by listening more closely to what students are saying.

Oral language skills matter in a world where articulate communication occurs at a global level. Students need to be able to understand and navigate and communicate with the global community available to them through the internet and other media. If they are to have choices in life, being articulate and understanding the world around them is absolutely critical. It is also a foundation for reading and writing skills. Improved oral language will positively impact other literacy skills.

Hunch

Our students have to learn at least two, sometimes as many as four different dialects. The informal friend dialect, the community style (especially important for our Aboriginal students), a first language, and the more formal communication style required for school. Students need help understanding the differences and understanding what is expected of them in their oral communications at school.

We educators often make assumptions and forget to ask clarifying questions about what our students understand. We often leap through curriculum without slowing down to assess and listen to their thinking.

New professional learning

- Some teachers were involved in the Vancouver Island University and Young Readers Inquiry projects and we used some of the new resources and structures across the school. We depended on the coaching from Debbie Koehn and Frances Roch (coaches from the VIU project) and attempted to learn how to use the Spiral of Inquiry process to guide our actions throughout the year.
- We began to learn about First Peoples Principles of Learning and some teachers experimented with using Aboriginal resources in our daily instruction.
- We met weekly in teams (intermediate and primary) to discuss student learning and plan next steps with regards to our goal. Many new learning tasks employed formative assessment strategies and used media to engage learners. We are still early students of formative assessment instruction ourselves and needed to support each other in continuing to keep these effective ways of teaching in the forefront.

Some key professional reading and learning focused on:

- A/B Partner Talk activities
- Richard Allington's 'Every Child, Every Day' synopsis provided by Faye Brownlie
- Exploring First Peoples Principles of Learning in our own lives
- AIM methods of instruction for French Immersion primary teachers (inservice in September 2012) and one English class (FSL)
- Implementation of Daily 5 formative assessment/self regulation strategies (one teacher new to the strategies)
- Effective implementation of the 'resource teacher in the classroom' as led by Faye Brownlie & Randy Cranston through the Young Readers project.

Taking action

Primary French teachers focused on using the AIM method of oral instruction.

- Primary English teachers used A/B partner talk, adapted Picture Word Induction Model strategies and they modeled, prompted and guided speaking skills.
- Most primary classrooms explicitly taught reading strategies that used playful animals and their characteristics. They were taught in order of importance, beginning with Meaning, then moving to Structural and lastly Visual strategies (MSV). Students were taught and expected to articulate how they used appropriate strategies to help them become more powerful readers (metacognition).

- Some primary classrooms used Strong Nations leveled readers to model reading strategies and for guided reading and student independent reading.
- One classroom used hands on activities to explore First Nations history and students presented 3-D models of historical aspects of Aboriginal life. Guest speakers were also invited in to share the history of local Aboriginal people.
- Intermediate teachers focused on A/B partner talk and helped students develop research make oral presentations skills through curricular topics and ‘personal passion’ projects.
- In many classrooms a resource teacher team-taught during the literacy block.
- All teachers chose a case study student with some learning needs to guide their planning of strategies for instruction (modeled after the Young Readers project).

Checking

Anecdotes

- When students were exposed to the Strong Nations readers, many engaged with the texts, pictures and content with enthusiasm. They connected well with the stories because they had plenty of background knowledge that aligned with the books. “That was fun!” and “This book has people that look like me!” were two comments that imprinted in the memories of teacher

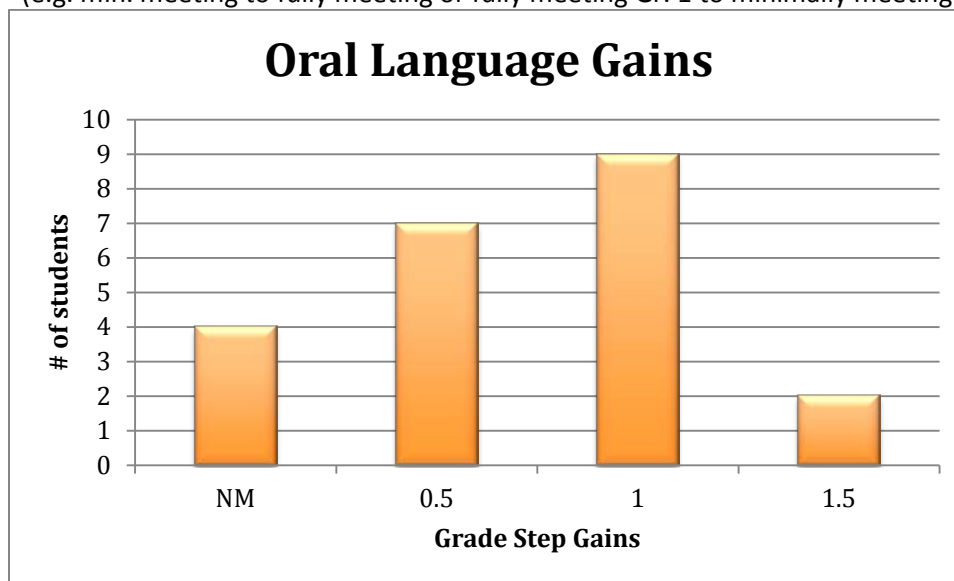
Quantitative Data

- We used the ‘Rainbow Rubrics’ designed by the Vancouver Island University Rural Literacy Project, BC Performance Standards and a locally developed Kindergarten assessment tool. The data summary is not yet available from the university.

NM = Progress not measurable

.5 = half a year progress

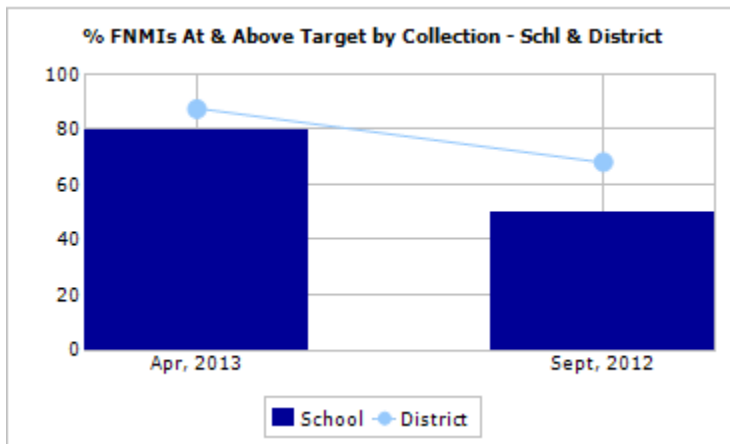
(e.g. min. meeting to fully meeting or fully meeting Gr. 1 to minimally meeting Gr. 2)



DATA for a grade 3 classroom using the Rainbow Rubrics from VIU

DART

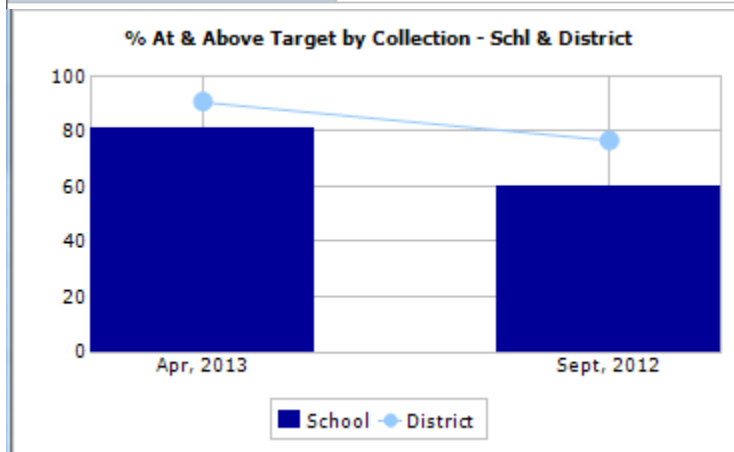
Approaching, Fully Meeting & Exceeding Expectations First Nations Students Grades 3-7



School & District Comparison Grades 03-07 Combined: Percentage of Students At & Above Target by Collection Period

% At & Above	Apr, 2013	Sept, 2012
School	79 %	50 %
District	87 %	68 %

% At & Above	Apr, 2013	Sept, 2012
School	81 %	60 %
District	91 %	77 %



Reflections/Advice

We have only just begun to scratch the surface of learning about First Peoples Principles of Learning, strengthening the adults' knowledge of Aboriginal culture (local and national history), and using current, relevant Aboriginal resources with our students. We need to reach out to our local Aboriginal community members to do this. The school district will help by funding the four schools in the inquiry projects to provide honoraria for local storytellers or cultural leaders to begin walking beside us and teaching us what we need to know.

Intermediate Teachers:

- We would like to explore developing a stronger community of learners at the intermediate level so we can have increased successful peer learner opportunities.

- We know personal engagement in learning is 'critical' for students of today. How can we support engagement for pre-teens that also develops responsible social behaviours?
- We need to take advantage of mentorship opportunities: technology for learning; independent learning projects that the French classes engaged in 2012-13; FLESS student inquiry work (PattiAnn Plowman); Glenview for inquiry & oral presentations; Community of learners work (Nanaimo)

Primary

- We need to learn about helping students become more metacognitive about their learning through talk.
- Some teachers are expressing a strong desire to learn more about 'catching the young readers before they fall'. More intervention is needed earlier so we don't end up with the students who are transitioning to intermediate who are unable to read at grade level.
- Some primary teachers are considering the implementation of peer coaching for reading which will further help develop the oral language as well as metacognitive strategies.
- Several teachers would like to explore how project based learning in the primary grades can impact oral language development (engagement and student interest may drive deeper learning)

All our data indicates that our Aboriginal students in general are moving forward with their learning but they are still not achieving at the same rate as other students. Our staff is at the beginning of their learning about local Aboriginal culture and using Aboriginal resources as a way to increase engagement and achievement for our Aboriginal students.

Due to significant staffing changes for the coming fall, a focus was not narrowed down beyond the reflections above.

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