

**ABORIGINAL ENHANCEMENT SCHOOLS NETWORK
2011-2012**

**WEST HEIGHTS COMMUNITY SCHOOL
#75 Mission**

Leadership Team

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School Context/Community Involvement

West Heights Community School is located in a rural setting within a residential community. West Heights Community School is a K-Grade 6 school of 240 students from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Twenty percent of the school population is Aboriginal. We are fortunate to have an Aboriginal Liaison Worker for two days each week. Initially, the entire primary School (six classes in all) and a number of intermediate special needs students were involved in this school inquiry. However, my final findings are based on four primary classes and the special needs students, 80 students in total.

School Inquiry and Action

Aboriginal Learning and Healthy Lifestyle

School Question

Will the co-creation of an Aboriginal yoga unit, involving all primary classes K-3, allow for students to have a richer understanding of the Aboriginal culture and foster positive attitudes towards a healthy lifestyle? Will this activity stimulate student's thinking about the Aboriginal culture and how will this be reflected in their writing?

Focus of Inquiry

The focus of my inquiry was to integrate the Aboriginal culture, by appealing to students multiple intelligences, within physical fitness classes. In addition, for the students to provide thoughtful feedback that moves learning forward for the individual learner.

Links with District Enhancement Agreement

- To increase the knowledge for all students to learn about Aboriginal culture, by increasing the opportunities to learn about the Aboriginal culture.
- To ensure that Aboriginal students feel a sense of belonging to their school. Aboriginal students gain a greater sense of belonging in an inclusive meaningful environment that is reflected in the school community and the classroom.

Strategies

- Introduced yoga to the primary school and intermediate special needs students
- Encouraged the students to co-reflect, co-create and co-problem solve as they chose the Aboriginal art to be placed on their mats during yoga classes
- Encouraged the students to collaborate and make decisions, as a large group, as they chose the Aboriginal music and Aboriginal animal poses for their yoga program
- Encouraged the students to self assess/evaluate, through story writing and weekly reflection sheets, their participation and development during the yoga classes.
- Presented the yoga, with emphasis on integrating Aboriginal art, music and poses to the entire school.
- Continued involvement in the Aboriginal yoga program for students to become more in tune with themselves and physical capabilities.

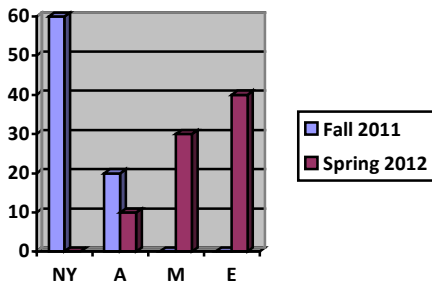
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Focus on Formative Assessment Strategies

- During this inquiry it became very obvious to staff and parents that the students were the owners of their own learning. This was evident by all student engagement in co-creating and participating on a weekly basis in the Aboriginal yoga program.
- The students became teaching resources for each other as they internalized their learning and modeled it to help their peers become involved and active participants.
- The self evaluation sheets encouraged the students to reflect on their learning and provide regular thoughtful feedback whereby they began thinking about how to improve.

School Findings

	NY	A	M	E
Fall 2011	60	20	0	0
Spring 2012	0	10	30	40



AESN Plans for 2012-2013

Next year I have a new teaching assignment working at a middle school with Grade 7 and Grade 8 students. My vision is to continue with integrating the Aboriginal culture, hopefully on a daily basis, as I focus on the needs of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students using holistic educational practices. In addition, I plan to continue promoting a healthy lifestyle with and from my students with the hope their learning will be internalized.

Reflections, Advice

This research /inquiry project was a positive and stimulating experience for all students and staff involved. It was challenging using a holistic educational practice as it can initially be time consuming with 80 students co-creating, co-reflecting and co-problem solving as they discussed and made changes within their learning. However, the students seemed to be intrinsically motivated as they remained focused and engaged in their learning.

Inviting the special needs students proved an extremely motivating and positive learning experience, for each of them, as they were anticipating the next pose and totally involved. There were many positive comments from the special needs student's teachers and educational assistants that the yoga provided them with an inclusive learning environment. What a magical moment in education!

In addition, my inquiry took a different pathway in that my vision was to co-create an Aboriginal Garden at our school to further involve Aboriginal students, honour and respect the Aboriginal culture and to extend the Aboriginal culture to non-Aboriginal students and the local community. The garden was created with the help of many active participants, involving students, West Heights PAC, School Trustee and local community individuals/group. The garden is established and is beautiful with Aboriginal native plants, Aboriginal stepping stones and a bench for the school and local community to visit, contemplate and enjoy!