

**NETWORKS OF INQUIRY AND INNOVATION  
2011-2012**

**THORNHILL ELEMENTARY  
#82 Coast Mountains**

**Leadership Team**

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**School Context/Community Involvement**

Thornhill Elementary School is located in the beautiful Coast Mountains School District. This year over 200 students and 30 staff members participated in creating a dynamic learning environment. Thornhill Elementary School is interested in creating caring students by participating in a food sustainability program – it grows many vegetables that is shares during harvest season with the neighbourhood.

Thornhill Elementary School boasts a salad bar, where many of the harvested foods are shared with the students at lunch. Thornhill Elementary students are proud of their Aboriginal heritage and many cultural aspects are shared through a fine arts program that includes traditional arts and drum playing. Educators at the school are interested in Social Emotional Learning as well as academic learning. This year the MindUp program was successfully introduced throughout the building and there was a school wide focus on improving writing skills.

Thornhill Elementary School is a true community school, boasting an afterschool program available to all students, sports activities, community sponsored programs, and community evening access to the gym and school facilities.

**School Inquiry and Action**

**School Question**

To what extent, and specifically, what actions by the school leader will create a difference in both adults' and students' mindsets about student learning? What creates change?

During this year of job action, the school leader wanted to help educators create system change around how learning in the school environment took place. The school leader was new to the building, and wanted to support all learners within.

**Strategies**

Before the principal was appointed to the school, some teaching staff had decided to engage in an after school book club around improving writing strategy use. Although this book club was open to all, some teachers were unable to attend after school functions. Then, job action made attending book club meetings impossible. The school leader wanted to continue the good work that was started.

- A good deal of the school budget was devoted to learning team meetings
- Writing performance standards were included with the book copies, each teacher received a copy of the book used for the reading club, and grade appropriate writing standards
- A cross school write was held – for many teachers this was the first time that they had participated in a cross school write. The school leader, with consultation with the teachers, developed the topic and criteria for the cross school write. Performance standards were closely examined.
- The school participated in a cross school write. Student writing samples were pulled at random and teachers participated in a cross school assessment using the performance standards. They used a form of ORID – observe, record, infer, and do to develop their plan

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of action. Teachers used sticky notes and made random observations about the writing using the strands of the performance standards. They placed sticky notes above a center line or below – above for what we were doing well, below for what we needed to develop as our cross school focus.

- Our student assessment decided that we needed to focus on form. Our district literacy leader, Kathy Eades, agreed to meet with us and lead us in our learning.
- We met three more times, each time sharing our successes and challenges with our teaching of form. We read articles, chapters, and shared student work. We developed lesson plans to continue addressing our students’ needs.
- We reassessed in a cross school write, using the same ORID process.
- We celebrated our successes and challenges.

**School Findings**

	NY	A	M	E
Fall 2011	25%	35%	38%	2%
Spring 2012	20%	15%	49%	6%

We are focused on the fact that we have moved 49% of our students into meeting expectations and this has increased the number of students meeting or exceeding from 40% to 55% which is significant. We are reasonably sure that our focus on improving teachers’ understanding of the writing process has increased our students’ understandings of the writing process. We saw an increase in both the length and strength of our students’ writing processes.

**School Plans for 2012-2013**

In the coming year, we will follow the same process. Our students will continue to develop skills as writers, and we will continue to assess to meet their learning needs using the performance standards. Next year, we hope our students become more fluent at self assessing and peer assessing and will be more involved in the goal setting process by setting their own goals.

**Reflections, Advice**

We felt successful and did some great work. We learned that we are just as vulnerable learners as our students and admitting challenges can be just as worthwhile as sharing successes when you are in a group of educators that you trust. We moved forward as a group.