



2013-2014 AESN Case Study

School: Chase River Elementary **District:** SD68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith

Area of focus: Enhancement Agreement

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Question / focus area: How does the heritage of storytelling improve oral language and comprehension in accordance with performance standards when combined with a code of conduct such as the *community of learners*?

Scanning: We noticed that students gained focus with the use of a prop such as a talking stick. However, they were more prone to use body language to communicate than being able to achieve and maintain academic conversations. For example, most responses were short phrases or one word answers.

Focus: Did storytelling help improve the quality of oral expression from the students? Did it help students comprehend the deeper meaning of the text?

Hunch: More frequent modeling and exposure to storytelling would help students improve academically. Although some of our students may be Aboriginal they may not all gravitate toward oral traditions. We are all very diverse and have our own learning “intelligences,” therefore not every student will make the same academic gains through storytelling.

New professional learning: We will continue to study resources and strategies related to structured talk, A/B partner share, and oral expression. We will try to establish a professional group to work with at our school, and continue to investigate how different forms of assessments can be used to empower our students’ learning.

Taking action: The use of A/B partner share, structured oral sharing of literature, and class discussions all improved as the year progressed. Some gains were very modest. It is important to allow students the ability to learn according to their style(s) and to express themselves accordingly as well.

Checking: Students learned to follow an agreed upon code of conduct and the importance of such structures and routines. Most students were able to improve the quality of oral expression and comprehension through prompting, extending, elaborating, connecting, questioning, and clarifying. However, storytelling is not, in my

opinion, suitable for all students. It is important to maintain a variety of learning strategies. Initial observations and self-assessments were used to get a baseline. A four point criteria/performance standard was created and implemented soon after the baseline was determined. As the year progressed definite gains were made in the students' abilities to orally express themselves and to understand the big ideas.

- Beginning of the year: Not Yet – 6, Satisfactory – 13, Average – 8, Excellent – 1
- End of year: Not Yet – 3, Satisfactory – 8, Average – 11, Excellent – 6

Reflections/Advice: The goal of this inquiry was to see the impact of storytelling on oral expression and comprehension. The overall results showed gains in oral expression, comprehension, and self-regulation. Storytelling is not for everyone. Some students will need different methods to express themselves (e.g., writing, art, and poetry). The use of a talking stick combined with a traditional Aboriginal story really focused the students on the learning and behavioral expectations which were required to progress with this endeavor. I plan to continue with a storytelling component in combination with various oral expression strategies/comprehension activities. It is important to allow all students avenues for success. Therefore, I will allow students options on the ways they express themselves and demonstrate their learning.