



## 2013-2014 AESN Case Study

**School:** James Ardiel Elementary

**District:** SD36 Surrey

**Area of focus:** Enhancement Agreement

**Inquiry Team Members:** Shelley Brett, Donna While, Sandy Nazarchuk, Laura Anderson

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**Scanning:** In the area of writing, Aboriginal students are performing slightly below, or the same level as non-Aboriginal learners. In the areas of meaning, style, form and conventions 86 % of Aboriginal students are minimally meeting or above compared to 90% of non-Aboriginal learners. For students to be able to write well they need to know their subject. Real life experiences enrich the writing process because it is a lived experience. Many of our students do not have opportunities to learn beyond their immediate community.

**Focus:** To what extent will the participation in field based studies enhance the learning for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students? Field based studies deepen learning and provide lived experiences learners can draw upon when they write and reflect on their learning. Grade 7 students created their own blogs this year and the writing they completed after field studies was significantly better in the areas of meaning, style, form and conventions than other posts they wrote about just any topic. We chose the following First Peoples Principles of learning for our inquiry project:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focussed on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships and a sense of place.)
- Learning recognizes the role of Indigenous knowledge
- Learning is embedded in memory, history and story.

**Hunch:** Because many of our students do not have opportunities to explore and visit other communities in the lower mainland. Providing field based studies through school allows the students to visit, observe and experience other places other than their immediate community. The field studies to the Art Gallery, the Museum of Anthropology, Lynn Canyon and Aboriginal day deepened student learning and engagement as evidenced in their written blog posts.

**New professional learning:** The teachers were very passionate and knowledgeable of the subjects/topics (ancient civilizations, compare and contrast with First Nations artifacts and how climate influences artifacts of early people), and did lots of front-loading before the students attended the field studies. The students were prepared well for their workshops at the Art Gallery. During the exploration of artists Lawren Harris,

Edward Burtynsky, and Emily Carr, students were able to draw upon knowledge they already had in order to deepen their learning as they worked with the Art Gallery staff. Check out the following blogs written by students of their experiences and learning during their visit to the Vancouver Art Gallery. Notice the richness and detail in their writing.

<http://tddblogger.weebly.com>

<http://lexi13.weebly.com>

<http://soulfilledcup.weebly.com/soul-cup-9996>

<http://meilody.weebly.com/blog.html>

<http://haychaii.weebly.com/10085blog>.

**Taking action:** The students were prepared well for their workshops at the Art Gallery, Museum and Lynn Canyon. The teachers learned how powerful technology is as a tool for reflection and learning. The students' blogs were a big hit and the students enjoyed writing for a global audience. They also loved being able to comment on each other's posts. We hosted an Aboriginal Day that was a huge success. Every class in the school participated in three cultural sessions, and in a school field study.

**Checking:** Student writing improved like we expected it to as students learned and deepened their understanding of the four aspects of writing described in the performance standards. Students were able to write detailed, informative reflections of their field study experiences and the quality of writing was better than other impromptu writing topics as evidenced in the above sample of student blog posts.

### **Reflections/Advice:**

We learned:

- Lived experience through field studies does improve students ability to reflect, connect and write
- Technology is a powerful tool for students to write for a global audience, connecting and learning from others