



2013-2014 AESN Case Study

School: Stride Avenue Community School **District:** SD41 Burnaby

Area of focus: Student Level

Inquiry Team Members: S. Freeman, V. Feretos, U. Malli, Z. Damji, V. Norman

Contact Information: Phone # 604-664-885
sharon.freeman@sd41.bc.ca

Question / focus area: Would the use of Aboriginal literature increase the knowledge/awareness/attitudes of the students at Stride Avenue Community School about Aboriginal culture?

Scanning: At the onset of the inquiry, there did not seem to be much awareness of Aboriginal history or culture. Even the majority of our Aboriginal population in the school did not seem to have basic knowledge.

Focus: If we shared Aboriginal literature with students, would they become more aware of Aboriginal history and culture within the Canadian context? We wanted to weave Aboriginal content into the curriculum (particularly in language arts and social studies) to ensure that students and staff could articulate information about the devastation caused by residential schools.

Hunch: We felt that, other than the work that was done specifically with our Aboriginal students, that we were not doing enough as a group to incorporate Aboriginal content into the curriculum. We decided to use Aboriginal literature as an entry point to change that.

New professional learning: We used a book written by a First Nations author increase our own knowledge of Aboriginal history. One teacher shared a collection of Aboriginal literature with us and did a workshop related to this material. Throughout the year, she met with several members of Burnaby's Aboriginal Team to offer advice and give information. We found the information/ideas that she shared from those sessions to be really useful for our school team.

Taking action: We used age-appropriate Aboriginal literature with all of our students on an ongoing basis – generally related to our monthly school-wide social responsibility themes. While we do not have statistical evidence to support this, our anecdotal

evidence from classroom discussion indicates an increased awareness of Aboriginal history and culture.

Checking: Yes, we believe that the use of Aboriginal literature (and discussions about the topics) did make a difference. It was a start to enable staff to bring more Aboriginal content into their programs rather than most content being provided only through the school library. As a baseline, we used the attached questionnaire/survey with all of our Intermediate students. There are no performance standards available. Unfortunately, a comparative questionnaire/survey was not completed at the end of the school year. We will continue our work in our classrooms and library in the 2014-2015 school year.

Reflections/Advice: We validated our feelings that when students are engaged in age-appropriate literature they want to learn more about the topic. That was certainly the case with the use of Aboriginal literature. The questions and discussion that flowed at all grade levels, indicated - although only experientially – that there was an increase in awareness/interest/understanding of Aboriginal history and culture in Canada. Our two pieces of advice would be to:

- have a lead person at the school level who can share information, suggestions, curricular guidance, materials, and support the learning
- to meet regularly as a group to monitor successes, problems, and ideas