



## 2013-2014 AESN Case Study

**School:** Ecole Christine Morrison Elementary **District:** SD75 Mission

**Area of focus:** Transitions

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**Question / focus area:** We have identified a small group of students who were initially enrolled in French Immersion whose parents have now switched them to the English program. We want to follow their progress in the English program to see if their achievement and school satisfaction increases.

**Scanning:** What we noticed was that the students started to make progress more quickly than when they were in a French Immersion class. They were still not at the academic grade level of their peers but they were progressing. Three of the students will be undergoing further academic testing (full psychoeducational assessments). The students were happier and displayed less anxiety than when they were in a French Immersion setting.

**Focus:** We focused on two key areas – student satisfaction with school and academic success. Did these areas increase after changing from the French Immersion program to the English program? Consultation occurred with school level staff (teachers, learning support, Aboriginal support worker) and the district Aboriginal principal. Attendance records and report cards (anecdotal comments, letter grades, and work habits) were analyzed.

**Hunch:** We predicted that the students would find more school satisfaction by changing to the English program because they have a better understanding of the English language and will be able to benefit from more support at home. We predicted that academic success may not show any increase as many times if a learner struggles with literacy skills in one language this will continue in another. This prediction was somewhat true in that most of the students continued to struggle and are not yet at grade level. However, progress is evident. We are very interested in the results of upcoming psychoeducational assessments for these students.

**New professional learning:** Our staff made the integration of Aboriginal culture into daily classroom curriculum a priority. Our primary teachers were introduced to a First Nations reading series. Intermediate teachers read a memoir of an Inuit girl who emerges from a residential school with her spirit intact. This is a first person account of

the authors mother-in-law. Both the author and her mother in law attended our school for an author visit with our students and staff. Staff attended a session on the legacy of residential schools.

**Taking action:** We found that using literature with an Aboriginal focus increased the students' reading engagement. All of the students received support from our English as a Second Dialect (ESD) teacher. When they were in the French Immersion program, this support was not available to them.

The greatest action we took was introducing the Halq'uemaylem language to our students. This is the traditional language of the Sto:lo people. We were fortunate that our Aboriginal district principal arranged for our Aboriginal support worker to be joined every Tuesday by Halq'uemaylem language instructors. The students eagerly looked forward to their Tuesday learning. They presented their learning to our formal leaders on May 20, 2014 in the form of traditional Halq'uemaylem songs. Our Aboriginal support worker organized numerous other activities that helped increase school satisfaction for our students. These included: lacrosse lessons, pow wow dancing, drumming, Metis jigging, and an Aboriginal walk/run program.

**Checking:** The students were surveyed about their feelings regarding success at school, attendance, work habits and enjoyment of learning the Halq'uemaylem language. They rated their feelings on a scale of 1-5 (1 being the lowest and 5 the highest).

Results:

Since moving into the English program, do you feel that you are more successful in your learning?

*60% reported 5, 40% reported 4*

Since moving into the English program, do you feel that you work harder at school?

*100% reported 5*

Since moving into the English program, do you enjoy attending school more?

*80% reported 5, 20% reported 3*

Did you enjoy learning the Halq'maylem language this year?

*100% reported 5*

Student Comments:

"I thought it would be way more easier in Grade 3 English. I couldn't even count to 20 in French, now I can count to 100!"

“I never had a nice time in kindergarten. It was upsetting for me.”

“English feels easier than French. Spelling is easier.”

“I love my new friends that I have in my English class. I still have friends from my French class.”

Attendance Rates:

For 60% of the students, the number of absences decreased by at least 50%.

Surprisingly, for 40% of the students, the number of absences increased by 50%.

Late arrivals were not affected significantly by the move from French Immersion to the English program.

Academic Achievement:

Fall assessments indicated that the primary students were *not meeting expectations* for reading, writing, speaking/listening. They were *approaching expectations* for numeracy.

The intermediate students letter grades and work habits improved from the June 2013 report in November 2013. By the March report card, one student received all Gs for work habits and achieved honour roll status for her academic letter grades.

**Reflections/Advice:** We have learned that the children transitioning into the English program before grade 3 need a great amount of support during the initial transition. Students transferring into grade 3 English have not had any instruction in English. For most, they are at a beginning grade 1 reading level. Early literacy skills need to be re-introduced and re-taught. At this grade level, the students are aware that they are not working at the same level as their peers. Students transitioning at the grade 4 or 5 level have had instruction in English from grade 3 on in the French Immersion program. This seems to have helped in the transition.