



## 2013-2014 AESN Case Study

**School:** Kitimat City High    **District:** SD82 Coast Mountains

**Area of focus:** Transitions

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**Scanning:** At Kitimat City High, we noticed a number of First Nations students were not continuing with their education once they graduated. Many seemed to struggle with what to do next in their life. As a team, we realized the students needed to have a direction before they graduated from Kitimat City High (KCH).

**Focus:** Our focus area was not a learning focus, but a focus on connections. Our driving question was: “Are First Nations students more apt to go to post-secondary education if they begin a connection to an institution in their high school graduation year?” We chose this question because of the social nature of our First Nations students being strongly related to community connection.

**Hunch:** We believed that a field trip to a post-secondary institution would help Grade 12 students see the “bigger picture” of their learning, beyond their own high school graduation, and create a sense of familiarity and support for our students, thus encouraging them to apply to a post-secondary program.

**New Professional Learning:** We met with our representatives from Northwest Community College (NWCC) and set up a field trip for KCH students. Through this visit, we were able to better understand what programs were available at NWCC and the support systems in place for the students (learning support personal, library access, student accommodations, and cafeteria)

**Taking Action:** Our visit lasted a full day (including transportation time of 1 ½ hours). At the last minute, we were also able to visit the UNBC satellite campus as well. The students all stated they enjoyed the visits and didn’t realize what was available to them so close to home. It should be noted that priority was given to graduating First Nations students, but that non-Aboriginal graduates were also able to attend the visit.

**Checking:** In summary, we feel the visit was a success. We have two students who have applied to/intend to apply to NWCC. We do need to clarify that KCH is a small school with 12 graduating students this year, three of which are First Nations.

The timing of the visit has coincided with a jump in availability of jobs for graduating students in the pipeline projects that are ongoing in Kitimat. If these jobs were not available, we suspect we would have more students applying to a post-secondary institution. In speaking to students, they have stated that they would like to further their education, but the draw of a high paying job is too strong. In the future, we feel more than one visit is needed to develop a stronger connection.

**Reflections/Advice:** We strongly believe that all students would benefit from visiting one or more post-secondary institution, before they graduate from high school, in order to reduce any anxiety about going to a larger educational institute. We encourage other educators who work with grade 12 students to set up visits with your local training centers/colleges/universities to help students become familiar with the structure and services offered.