



2013-14 AESN Case Study

School: Stelly's Secondary **District:** SD63 Saanich

Area of Focus: Transitions

Inquiry Team Members: Tina Pierik, Terry Steele, Phillip Tom, Kudagan Anderson, Melissa Austin

Question/focus area: Will implementing a Tri-Mentorship transition inquiry strengthen the transition process for grade 8 Indigenous learners as they transition into grade 9 at Stelly's Secondary School?

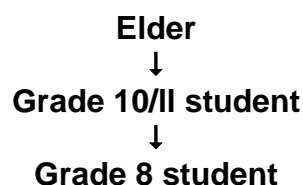
Scanning: Our Indigenous learners have struggled with transitioning to Stelly's Secondary School from Bayside Middle School and LAUWELNEW Tribal school (Grade 8-9). They struggle with the academic expectations in grade 9 and they struggle with a sense of belonging.

Focus: We focused on strengthening the transition process between grade 8 and 9 by using student mentors from Stelly's and community Elders, and by purposefully planning activities for grade 8 students and mentors to participate in together.

Hunch: The adults at Stelly's and Bayside have worked at making smooth transitions for incoming grade 8 students. Yet, a high number of grade 9 students still struggle with the academic demands and the sense of connectedness to the Stelly's School community. Families report not feeling comfortable contacting staff at the secondary school with any of their questions or concerns about their child at school. Staff sometimes report feeling uncomfortable contacting the home of our Indigenous learners. We are hoping that by connecting incoming indigenous learners with both student and Elder mentors as part of the transition process we will see better academic success and a stronger sense of student and family connectedness to Stelly's Secondary.

New professional learning: Our team used our weekly collaboration time to discuss the research and anecdotal stories of the power of mentorship. We looked at mentorship programs around the province and the country. Some team members used an online program as a professional resource.

Taking action: We developed a Tri-Mentorship program involving local Elders, Stelly's students, and grade 8 Bayside students.



We purposefully planned activities for the students and mentors to spend time together in both school settings and participate in transition activities. Families were included in some of these transition activities. These relationships will be encouraged and nurtured in the following school year. It is our hope that these relationships will increase incoming students sense of belonging at Stelly's and help them access the support they need in order to be successful in their grade 9 year.

Checking: In an informal survey, the incoming grade 8 students report feeling very comfortable and excited with the transition process. They enjoyed their connection to their Stelly's mentor and the Elder mentor. We planned four transition activities with the Mentorship triads. The first three were very successful and well received. We will continue to gather evidence in the coming school year, including data from the "Tell it From Me" survey.

Reflections/Advice: Overall, the anecdotal evidence so far is positive. We were surprised at the powerful and positive impact on our current Stelly's students who chose to be mentors. As a matter of fact, although the Stelly's team selected the mentors, other students selected themselves!

Next time, we would develop some criteria for choosing mentors and make the criteria known to the prospective mentors ahead of time. Our next steps are to look at this tri-mentorship model with indigenous learners at post secondary, mentoring our current Stelly's students. We had a chance to report out on this inquiry at our community meetings around our Enhancement Agreement and the feedback was very positive.

This inquiry took a lot of time to implement as all of the Elders had to be personally invited for each event and we had to organize transportation for some Elders. The cost was also a challenge as we pay Elders an honorarium for their time, and the overall cost of food and activities.