



2013-2014 NOII Case Study

School: Deroche Elementary

District: SD75 Mission

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Question / focus area: With a focus on intentionally taught writing elements, will the inclusion of Aboriginal literature (fiction and nonfiction) with reading and oral storytelling, motivate and inspire students to improve their own writing skills, specifically in the area of creative writing?

Scanning: Our students were hesitant writers and as a staff we were concerned about our students' writing. We wanted them to be excited about writing without getting stuck on topics. Some students were frustrated with the process of writing and had what can be described as writer's block. We decided to start by teaching our students the organization of a story; beginning, middle and end. We used a writing assessment guide for organization, and several graphic organizers to help the students visualize their stories.

Focus: With a focus on intentionally taught writing elements, will the inclusion of Aboriginal literature (fiction and non-fiction) with reading and oral storytelling, motivate and inspire students to improve their own writing skills, specifically in the area of creative writing?

We used a common Aboriginal practice of oral storytelling to shape our teaching practice. The intention was to inspire and motivate our students to tell stories with the hope of improvement in story writing. Keeping learners at the center, we taught students strategies for writing. Our main goal was to have students write a story with a beginning, middle and end. This was important because many of our students would get an idea but have no understanding of how to shape it into a story. Some of the older students would write very long stories that had no common focus and an abrupt or "to be continued" ending. Students didn't know how to end their stories and often got stuck on a "run-on" on plot.

Oral story telling incorporates these three First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- *Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities*

- *Learning recognizes the role of indigenous knowledge*
- *Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story*

Hunch: As the majority of our student population is Aboriginal, our staff thought that students were not connecting with the stories that may be typically used in a lesson plan. We felt they may have more ideas if modeling and exemplars were taken from culturally connecting material, using storytelling by Aboriginal teachers and reading Aboriginal story books. We invited two community storytellers to our school to read with our students to motivate them and help them to connect with their story writing.

When we invited Elspeth, an amazing storyteller, and Viki, her Aboriginal counterpart, to our classrooms, things started to change. The students responded to the stories and we found that they not only loved to hear the stories and remembered them, but they also became more excited about writing their own. The stories that Elspeth told were interactive and structured so the students could anticipate what would happen next. Viki told some beautiful Aboriginal stories.

New professional learning: There are lots of factors that influence the students' writing, but throughout this process we found the excitement about writing growing in our classrooms. We found that we were more interested in teaching story writing as well. Oral storytelling has a place in the classroom; it is a great way to connect to our students.

- Staff developed a greater understanding when using aboriginal literature. Some resources include Aboriginal literature but many do not reflect Aboriginal culture, stories and practice.
- We learned about Aboriginal culture and stories that are not written down on paper. We hope to increase our knowledge of Aboriginal stories and their constructs so the students will be able to connect and share proudly their heritage and stories with their families as we celebrate their learning together.
- We shared and included non-Aboriginal students to develop a greater understanding of Aboriginal culture and to enhance story writing abilities for all students.

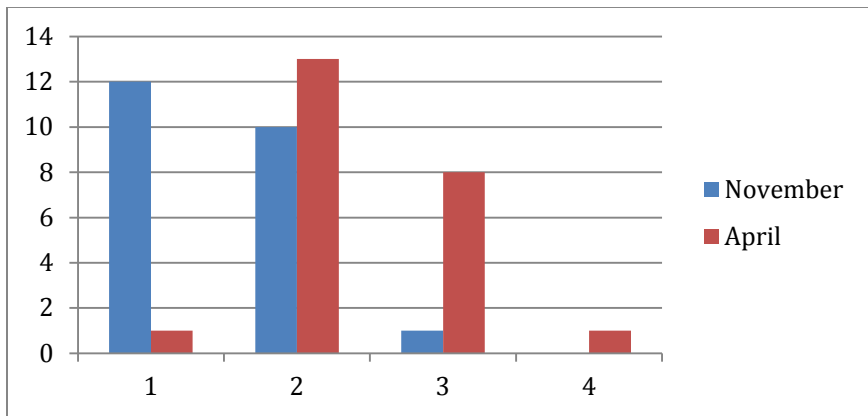
Taking action:

- We met as a school team regularly to review writing and teaching or writing processes within our small professional collaborative community. The action research model of planning, executing, reflecting and reviewing was adopted within the collaborative group.
 - We found that sticking to one story structure that could be differentiated for different ability groups worked best. We used a beginning, middle, and end scoring guide to help the children plan their thinking and story writing. Some of the older children had character development and problem solving involved as well. The younger children in the grade 1 class with Mr. Dalton told their story to Mr. D who scribed the story for his students.
- *All* students drew a picture of the story setting.

- Some student's stories and pictures were displayed on the bulletin boards in the schools.
- In the future, we hope to carry on with our plans to publish one book for each family of the children's stories in an anthology.

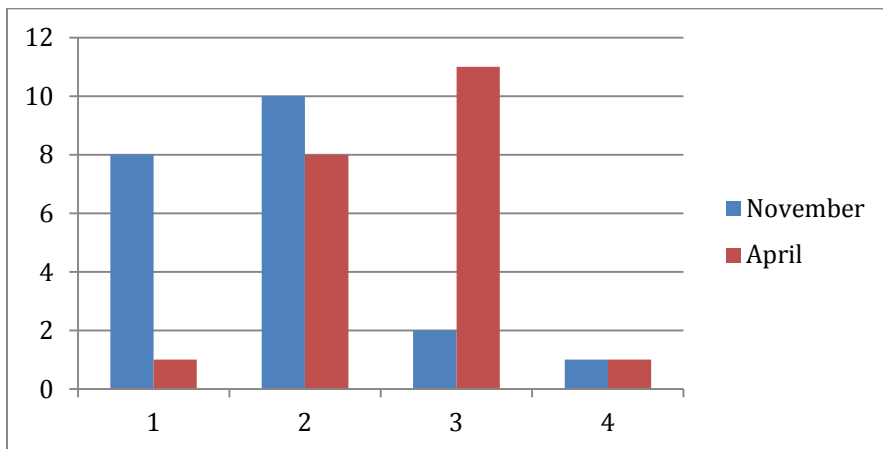
Checking: The students enjoyed writing and sharing their stories. They showed a sense of pride with their work. We used an assessment guide for writing to assess growth for the story writing for each student. Our data collection showed growth in each of the children's work using a pre-write and comparing a post write at the end of the project.

Division 1 Grades 4/5/6 combined pre and post story writing

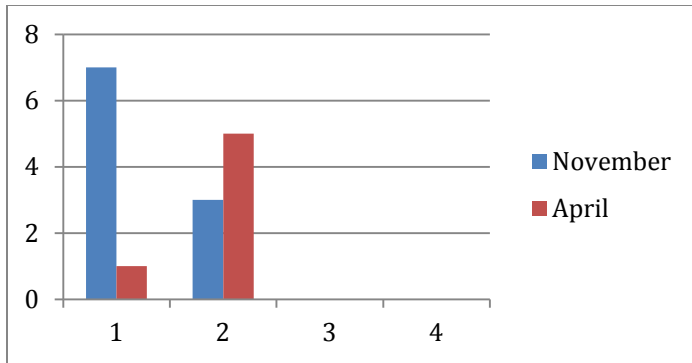


The student not yet meeting has a learning disability designation and would show as minimally meeting with adaptations and support.

Division 2 Grades 1/2/3 combined pre and post story writing



Division 3 K/1 grade combined (seen here only data for grade 1)



4 point score system

The students from Division 3 are emerging and developing Grade 1 writers. It is good to see a shift from not yet meeting to minimally meeting for half of the students. We have work to do with some of our early learning group.

Reflections/Advice: We learned that writing a story using a pencil and paper can sometimes block the creativity. The students improved writing with coaching on story structure using beginning, middle and end. Without the pressure of writing, the students were able to come up with original ideas and tell a story. We have also learned that we need to focus our support on early learning with our Grade 1 students for reading and writing. We plan to continue working with the foundation of storytelling/writing created by the students, and continue to improve the quality of their stories. We are hoping that with continued focus and support on reading and writing, the children will further improve.