



2013-2014 NOII Case Study

School: Houston Secondary

District: SD54 Bulkley Valley

Inquiry Team Members: Dwayne Anderson, Ted Beck, Julie Krall, staff and students

Scanning: We noticed that students are not as engaged as they could be, and they do not seem to own their learning and therefore are not at the centre of learning. We assessed how students were doing in relation to course content rather than the whole student.

Focus: Will assessing based on the core competencies and giving the students choice in their learning increase engagement?

Hunch: We are good at relationships, we keep the bigger picture in mind when dealing with students, and as a staff our assessment strategies are shifting. However, we are still “in the box” with disciplines and subject areas and not assessing all aspects of students’ learning (in relation to core competencies.)

New Professional learning: We continued to shift our practice toward formative assessment. As a staff we learned about inquiry, and concentrated on using our professional knowledge to change practice. This inquiry also connected to the whole staff as we worked together to create performance standards for the core competencies.

Taking Action: Students in the Inquiry class will be assessed using the core competencies. The content of the course will be the vehicle for the learning, but the focus will be communication, creativity and innovation, critical thinking, and personal and social responsibility.

Checking: Students from the Inquiry class will be interviewed about their experience in Inquiry process. The questions will focus on student engagement and ownership of their learning.

Survey Questions/Prompts:

- Tell me a little bit about what you learned in this course?
- What was this course about?
- Tell me what you learned about yourself while taking this course.
- How did it make you feel to have a wider range of your skills assessed?

Survey Results

1. Things the students learned:

- Innovation and personal responsibility
- How to finish a project
- How to work independently
- How to use your brain
- How to ask for other peoples' opinions on her ideas

2. The students thought the course was about:

- Learning to work on your own
- Learning new skills
- Asking questions and learning how to answer it
- Having a choice in what you learn

3. What the students learned about themselves:

- IF I put my mind to it, I can finish it
- I'm good at playing guitar
- If you are committed, you can do almost anything
- Moods can affect your life
- I'm not good at doing projects on my own
- I learned that I like to do hands on stuff
- I learned that I can talk to big crowds
- That I can find information
- I can do something if I put thought and time into it
- I learned that I waste time if I have a lot of it
- I learned I can use drills, saws and read directions and be able to come up with plans
- That I don't work good (sic) on my own
- I like to help others and that I like to make music and might make a career out it
- I'm capable of doing new learning that I didn't think I could do
- I learned that I am better at talking to people and now I might not want to be a pharmacist anymore
- Deciding on a topic is difficult
- How to work together with someone
- I've learned to ask more questions, and never give up

4. How the students felt about being assessed on their core competencies:

- I like it because they are more than just a percentage
- It made me feel like I was being responsible
- It was good that you would know if you weren't doing good in something
- I didn't like it because I felt like I was under a lot of pressure
- It was fine, but some questions made me feel uncomfortable
- It made me realize how much I've improved and what I could continue to work on
- It is fair because it is a way to see how we improved and learned
- I didn't like it because I wasn't meeting expectations
- Using the core competences took off the stress of having to take a test or exam and also gave us a clear idea on what we would have to improve on
- I thought it was cool that we got to make them up
- It was a different way of being assessed but I think that it works well for everyone's ideas and is not just set to one person's idea
- It was different because I'm not used to being assessed on things like that but it taught me new things
- I don't care how I am marked only what the mark is
- It's a little different and interesting to be assessed differently than normal

5. The strengths of Inquiry class were:

- Picking our own projects
- Choosing what I wanted to learn about
- Learning about the personal responsibility area
- Learning on your own
- It was the first time that I ever made something
- It was good to think in a different way
- Learn what I was interested in
- No set boundaries on what had to be done in a certain time
- How to work with others
- Had freedom in what we wanted to learn
- I enjoyed that people listened about it

6. In which areas could Inquiry 8 be improved? Were there areas of the course you disliked?

- Helping us some more
- I think that the beginning was not that clear but then after awhile it all started to make sense and it actually helped me in the end
- I think we should have started our projects earlier than we did
- They should allow people to work together
- More help and spend time with all the little projects in the beginning.

- In the beginning of the year when we had to learn about all those things it was kind of boring and it would be better if we just did one class on that stuff
- None
- I think we shouldn't do the first month of it when we had to fill out all those sheets, I really disliked that
- The beginning was a little long and I just wanted to be able to pick my project
- It was fine to me
- I felt the Inquiry course was boring in some parts. I don't know if it was just my topic or the course in general but I think it could be improved
- In the beginning speed things up so it's not so boring
- It kind of started off slow for some people
- I don't know and I didn't dislike the class
- The course was way too long
- The course could be improved with a bit more advice from the teachers
- The teachers could pull students one at a time more and ask the questions: Where are you at? How much longer? What have you learned?
- I didn't like how we were working in groups at the beginning and then BAM! We had to pick our projects
- I disliked when I sat alone in a different room
- I didn't like the course

7. Tell a story.

- It was amazing; the showcase had so many projects there.
- I got to build a catapult and it didn't take very long and the class was too long for my project.
- In Inquiry I have helped a friend build a project and I have learned to build a big project.
- On the day I had to perform in front of all the parents and other kids it was pretty scary. I was shaking when Tim was on because I was next and I thought I was going to mess up. So I just thought of it as a practice when I went on and I got through it.
- Once, about a few months ago, a girl wanted to do a project on the pipeline, and she did it! It took a long time but it was worth it. She got an A so it all worked out.
- Well I went into Inquiry and I like how I could sort of choose what I wanted to do and what way and what speed I would do it at.
- Well, I helped Alyssa. I let her and Shelby do my hair. It was fun letting them do my hair.
- One of the days Brooklyn and I went to her house to bake. This was our first time baking and we didn't really know what we were doing. We didn't know if we

were supposed to use wax paper or parchment paper. We decided to use wax paper. Thankfully her mom came home early, turns out that was a bad idea and that it would wreck our whole batch. That day we learned you should use parchment paper and not wax paper.

- I had to restart 3 times and in between everything Izzie end up sewing her finger by accident.
- I helped McKenzie by letting her tape me and it helped her because that was almost the main thing she had to do for her project. She needed a taped body because then she would be able to put things on it.
- I got the survival kit idea joking with a friend about a reality TV show. Then I'm like ya actually that's a pretty good idea.
- I first had the idea of doing baking. Then I changed to fashion. Then I changed it to my current project which is: "How Does Physical Activity Affect Your Body?"
- I got my idea when Hailey was talking about how I should start a business. She brought up the cookie business so we grouped together to start a business.
- I liked when I started to draw in this class. When I went to Batley and he helped me draw my car. I am most proud of my car.
- I enjoyed when I went to Vybz with Alyssa to take pictures for her. Even though Alyssa really only swept hair, we had a fun time.
- There were these two girls that didn't know what to do so they did a project that they had no idea about and worked together. They did making a dress, when doing this one girl sewed her finger and the other girl helped her. They finished the two dresses and were really happy with it.
- Camryn and I had a lot of laughs while building my shelf.
- When we started in this class Keegan and I were going to do something that involved music. We didn't know if we wanted to play an instrument or make speakers. The first weekend into the school year Keegan had a sleep over at my house. He brought his laptop and what was on it? FL Studios. I tried it and found it very difficult. I kept to it and eventually I figured out how to make catchy melodies and powerful bass lines.

Reflections: Based on the results of the survey, we can conclude that choice increases engagement in learning. The student's reflections showed that when being assessed on the core competencies they felt more confident because it gave them an idea of what they needed to improve on and what steps are next. As well, the focus was on their personal learning, rather than on a standard test or an exam.