



2013-2014 NOII Case Study

School: Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School **District:** SD92 Nisga'a

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Question / focus area: Will targeting specific literacy skills each month using a *pre-test, teach, post-test* framework with regular feedback to students improve students' overall success in school?

Scanning: We noticed individual differences amongst the students within each classroom. Learners function at different literacy levels within each grade level. Students are often assessed for literacy skills but communication of progress is informal and inconstant. Also, learners do not have a consistent practice of assessing their own learning.

Focus: Historically, Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School (NESS) has not targeted specific literacy skills or used formative assessment effectively. Students in a grade 10 English class range from a grade 3 reading level to grade 10. We wanted to find a way to meet the needs of all the students in our classrooms.

Hunch: Our school has already targeted key strategies to improve literacy. We have chosen to stream students according to ability to better meet the needs of the students. We have agreed upon one literacy skill per month to focus on in each class if it can be done in a relevant way. We have also initiated a district-wide process to target need-to-knows (most important learning objectives) for each grade level and subject area. Our hunch is that the *pre-test, teach, post-test* framework still isn't as effective as it could be.

New professional learning: We began by exploring simple literacy strategies, which could be used in any course: skimming, scanning, defining, and illustrating. This led to us agreeing upon common language, templates and procedures. Then through meeting together and discussing this project, we learned how to team-teach, connect to the community, as well as involve different grade levels in our lessons. Constantly reviewing our goals, and reflecting upon what was and was not working supported the learning of our team the most.

Taking action: As a team we met to discuss which literacy strategies to target; to track our results; discuss what our next steps would be; and to refocus our question. At the beginning of Semester Two, the question changed to focus on the skill of defining. This led to "Hero vs. Machine," a cross-curricular/cross grade/cultural performance art piece.

Checking: The majority of students (85%+) showed improvement for the individual learning skills when post tested. Seven of the twelve English 9 students who were involved in the project completed both the fall and spring School Wide Write assessments. Four of the students improved; one student remained the same; two students completed with a lower score. However, all seven students had strong introductions, which included a definition as well as a plan statement. This was a significant improvement since their fall School Wide Write.

This improvement is enough to make us want to continue focusing on literacy skills, as well as cross-curricular or theme-based learning next year. It isn't enough but it's a good start. As a bonus, students demonstrated deeper learning of theme after exploring it through the different media of: Elder presentations, movement, discussion and writing.

Reflections/Advice: We learned that our students are more capable than many teachers, and even the students, give themselves credit for. We also learned that cross-curricular projects require a commitment of time from the teachers involved, while thematic projects require length of time to take effect. Next year, we want to continue exploring thematic based learning and bring in more teachers. Our advice is to be patient, review your goals, be willing to re-evaluate your goals, and take time to count small successes. What we value the most is that we started with a small idea then through the process of collaboration allowed it to grow into a larger project.