



## 2013-2014 NOII Case Study

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

**Inquiry Team Members:** Devon Armstrong, Chris Homan, Don Lacy, Gwen Levesque, John Siebert

**Question/focus area:** We wanted to explore the use of individual white boards as a formative assessment tool in Science and Math classes at Stelly's Secondary School. Will this tool help teachers give students more regular and authentic feedback? Will the use of these boards engage our most vulnerable learners?

**Scanning:** Math is an academic area where many students experience challenges. Science 10 is a rigorous academic course that has a provincial exam. How can formative assessment guide the learning? What assessment strategies will encourage students to actively engage and take risks with their learning? Are we stretching our learners?

**Hunch:** We have seen a colleague make use of the white boards in a Math 10 Foundations class. We believe that by collaborating as an inquiry team on a regular basis and using this assessment tool in our classes, we will be able to give more immediate and effective feedback to our students. We will also be able to quickly assess what learning is happening or is stalled in each lesson. This feedback will guide our instruction.

**New professional learning:** We used our weekly collaboration time to review and discuss the use of this tool and other formative assessment strategies for math and science classes. We used an online program as a professional learning tool. We also shared this tool with other departments and lent out our class sets of boards for other teachers to try. We observed each other using the tool. We shared our observations and stories with the larger school staff at a staff meeting and during department collaboration.

**Checking:** Our team enjoyed the ongoing collaboration. The ongoing discussion evolved into looking at assessment strategies and not just this particular assessment tool. It also led to great discussion among different departments. Team members found the tool made it easier to peek over a student's shoulder to see how they were progressing on a problem. They also found the white boards useful for small group brainstorming. They used "Try This" exercises at the start of a class where the practice is important but having a copy of the work is not. Overall, students were more engaged in practice without the anxiety of formal evaluation. One teacher would use the boards for practice and then take photos of the boards and post to his website. One of our team

members was able to video the use of the boards in a Spanish class and again in a French Immersion class. Again, students were more engaged in the practice and more willing to take risks in their learning.

**Reflections/Advice:** This simple assessment tool led our staff to wonderful, ongoing discussion and collaboration about formative assessment across curricular areas. Our vulnerable learners reported feeling more comfortable with in-class practice and asking for clarification to steps where they got “stuck” right away. Teachers reported that they had a stronger sense of what learning was happening and where students were experiencing difficulty. This information guided their instruction the following day.