



2013-2014 NOII Case Study

School: Ucluelet Elementary School **District:** SD70 Alberni

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Question / focus area:

- 1) How can we increase student engagement in writing/representing by focusing on meaningful relevant experiences?
- 2) Will engagement increase if students are divided by gender groupings?

Scanning: At the end of last year we concluded:

- Everyone enjoyed the inquiry process. We want to continue and feel like we only just got started. Plans have been made to continue this format for next year.
- Student writing has improved in most cases. Student quality (i.e. voice) has hugely improved. Reluctant writers early in the year became more enthusiastic as the units progressed.
- Use of assisted technology was helpful

Focus: This was year two of working with educators and students from grades 4-7. Students were divided into smaller groupings for four 1hour blocks of time per week. Groups were based on ability, interest or gender depending on the topic. Educators worked with Coaches from Nanaimo School District to focus their teaching, refine their topics and consider assessment tools.

New professional learning: This year coaches helped us at the beginning of the year with class reviews. It was quickly realized that behaviour, particularly in our primary grades, was of the utmost concern. A greater attention to Positive Behavior Support (PBS) was developed throughout the year with weekly “school safety meetings” to address challenging situations and come up with action plans. As this settled, the literacy inquiry continued. Teachers took turns taking the lead on developing units and sharing with others during collaborative meetings.

Taking action: We used the following timeline throughout the year with our “intermediate literacy” allocated times.

- **September** – 4ps and personal writing (use of articles, social stories, friends/fun friends) end with whole school write on the following topics:
- Primary – What does the 4P’s mean to you?

- Intermediate – Based on your experiences what works well with the 4 P's and what needs to be improved on in our school?
- **October/November** – Poetry anthology in Lit Circle format. The showcase will be Oral presentations at our Remembrance Day assembly.
- **December** – Media Literacy/advertising
- **January/February** – Literature Circles – theme Holocaust/Japanese Internment. Focus on Oral Language/connections
- **March/April** – Historical/research projects
- **May/June** – Passion Based Learning (what will my life be like in 20 years)

Checking: Anecdotal comments were collected from each teacher before job action. Some included:

- “Girls independent novel study was difficult as they were too chatty.”
- “Students made connections deeper during lit circles.”
- “Oral discussions were more insightful than last year.”
- “Girls like being rewarded with more work...boys don't. So this worked with separate groups.”
- “Boys had more fun during poetry unit...more relaxed.”
- “We need to make sure the grades are not so mixed up next year (grade 3's in with 7's doesn't work).”

Teachers gathered writing samples at the end of September for a baseline. At the end of each unit there was a showcase for students to display their work. Students had quite a celebration at the showcase and often invited parents and community members to attend.

Reflections/Advice:

- We need to start the year with teachers having their own students for class bonding and getting to know each other. We will do small groupings for six weeks, then return back to classes.
- Self-regulation (movement breaks and choice) is important in all groups
- Use of engagement rubric is required before a unit and after (as developed by VIU)
- During Novel/literature circles, be sure to have ages closer to each other
- Space is a challenge (be sure each group has a defined space that will not be altered)

Plans for Next Year:

- There will only be two classes in intermediate next year so there will be less staff and groupings involved.
- A regular monthly plan will be developed early in the year much like this year. We will begin the year in whole class settings with extra staff (Educational assistant/specical education/language arts support) in each classroom with the topic of 4 P's (prompt, positive, prepared, and polite).