



2014-2015 AESN Case Study

School: George M. Dawson Secondary **District:** #50 Haida Gwaii

Area of Focus: Enhancement Agreement

Inquiry Team Members: David McLean, Daniel Schulbeck, Derek Seifert

Our focus for this year: Our focus was on providing learning opportunities outside the traditional schedule and content of school based classroom learning. We are trying to make place a bigger part of our programming and provide extended opportunities for students to interact with elements of this great place we inhabit.

Scanning: We have students whose interests and strengths aren't always showcased in the traditional classroom. We also have a backyard full of incredible outdoor opportunities and community members with expertise to share. We wanted to focus on place, relationships, and experiential learning, all of which are reflected in one of our district Enhancement Agreement goals: That students develop a strong sense of belonging to their learning environment and community.

Focus: We have experienced success with a yearly Field School Day, witnessed students thriving at a yearly outdoor education camp (grades 9 and 11), and wanted to bring the Outdoor Pursuits program into curricular programming rather than only offering it as extra-curricular.

Hunch: We knew that relationships and place were powerful elements of education and wanted to extend opportunities to enrich both elements. We were also hopeful that students would be appreciative of these efforts and that student recognition that staff are willing to take on new things and work outside of the box might then pay dividends in the classroom when students are asked to take on new challenges.

New professional learning: While all members of our team have been involved with collaboration and the organizing of events we had not taken on anything this big before. We learned a great deal about communication, planning, delegation, flexibility, and creativity. We gained confidence in our ability to make things happen despite the many obstacles that continue to pop up along the way.

Taking action: We decided to offer a series of Friday workshop days where students signed up for activities of their choice offered by staff and local experts. First we polled students for

workshop ideas, and then we weeded through these suggestions, looking into feasibility and narrowing down until we had a workable list. Next step was to find instructors, work within our budget and sign students up. In the end we had fewer days than we had at first anticipated (3 plus Field School day) but it was important that we focus on making the first year a success, and now we are looking forward to planning next year with information from staff and student surveys.

Checking: We checked in after every workshop day with participants and staff members to make changes that were deemed necessary before the next planned day. Workshop offerings were changed as needed to make the experience the best it could be. The staff meeting following each day provided a time for formal reflection amongst staff. We are in the process of administering surveys and early indications suggest that students and staff were pleased and looking forward to visioning for next year, which will happen at a meeting scheduled in the last week of work. With that I will stop and leave the Reflections/Advice for after the meeting when the official reflection and the beginnings of looking forward have taken place.

Reflections/Advice: Our staff and student surveys taught us that what we have accomplished this year was greatly appreciated and highly successful. Our meeting demonstrated that all of the teaching staff back our efforts and want to see the program expanded with their participation.

Advice: Start small and focus on making it work, demonstrate to staff that the program can and does work and if you are lucky enough to have a staff like the one we have they will back you up and throw their talents into the ring.