



## 2014-2015 AESN Case Study

**School:** Hazelton Secondary    **District:** #82 Coast Mountains

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**Our focus for this year:** Will the use of project based iPad technologies increase opportunities for First Nations students to demonstrate comprehension, connection and engagement?

**Scanning:** Hazelton Secondary School is a trilingual school in the Hazeltons. The Hazeltons are comprised of five small townships and seven reserves along the Skeena river, coming from two separate First Nations: the Gitksan and Wet'su'wet'en. The student population of Hazelton Secondary is approximately 349 students from grades 8 to 12. Of that population, 90% are of First Nations ancestry. Many of our students travel to school up to an hour each way daily by bus. The school is also home to a significant population of students identified as having special needs, approximately 15%.

Of all of our population demographics, the most concerning is the students who are 'at risk' or 'in risk'. We lose roughly 20% of our students from grade 8 to 12 through moving away and enrolling somewhere else. We lose another 15% of these grade 8 to 12 students due to various social, behavioral and academic issues that motivate them to leave/drop out.

We are home to many programs that help to strengthen our students: Back to the Land Culture Program, the Breakfast Program, in house MCFD worker 3 days a week, and a multitude of extracurricular programs for various student interests. However, there is still a disconnect for our risky kids. Hazelton Secondary School is seeking more programs that will engage students, help them develop their identity and their resilience, help them engage in school, provide them with transferrable skills to transition them out to the communities, set goals, gain self-esteem, and move towards academic proficiency.

The vision of the project was increase student's ability to express themselves in a variety of ways of their choosing (choosing appropriate apps on the ipad to show their learning), receive immediate focused feedback and formative assessment to help inform further decisions, contribute to their classroom community and actively participate in assessment in a concrete and structured way that fosters discovery. This program is envisioned as the intersection of five

vital areas of educational pedagogy: technology (digital literacy), Aboriginal representation and inclusion, project- based learning, intergenerational collaboration, and sound assessment practices for reflection, choice and evaluation. Students will be challenged (stretched) to use their current knowledge from across various curriculum areas to create a cohesive product.

Students will be the experts in using modern day apps and the technology. Teachers are the experts in the foundations of the curriculum. This structure will help to break down the traditional power structures in a classroom because two groups will meet and share the skills and learn from each other. We are attempting to meet students where they are at with their knowledge and encourage them to use their skills to show what they know and gain more skills.

**Focus:** The key areas of focus are finding engagement and connectedness through the use of iPad technologies. By utilizing the technology skills that students already have, we build their esteem by giving them a feeling of proficiency. By pairing those skills with projects using the ipads and a structured process of direct feedback and intergenerational collaboration adult to student and senior student to junior student), students will engage in academics, have a chance to show their knowledge in alternative ways, and feel a greater connectedness to school. The biggest difference for the students will be a well-structured clarity of purpose and sound collaborative assessment practices.

**Hunch:** Many classrooms at Hazelton Secondary School function in a standard way. A student learns the material and then produces a written paper/ poster/power point to show their learning at the end. We can open up the possibilities to movie making, cartoon strips, oral recorded stories, the options are endless. Our hunch is that by opening up the possibilities of choosing a way to show their learning and the possibilities of how students show their learning, students will become much more engaged in the process. By incorporating Aboriginal perspectives and providing direct feedback we believe students will take more ownership and pride in their final products. Our hunch is that students will maybe use time during lunch and other blocks to complete their final products. We will track this by collecting data on students who come on their own time to sign out iPads and on student and teacher anecdotal evidence about student questioning, curiosity, and engagement. We feel that students will be excited to celebrate their success and will include their families and community in their enthusiasm.

**New professional learning:** In April of 2014, we received 7 iPads and an opportunity to design a program for our school. We consulted with Dave Durant, a resident expert at Mount Elizabeth Middle Secondary School (MEMSS), a school within our district. Our Library was able to match those iPads with 6 more and for the first time we explored iPads as a teaching tool with students. We ran a pilot project using these 13 iPads with two colleagues for the months of May and June of 2014. Those two colleagues both taught grade 9 students so we inadvertently started all grade 9 students with a baseline of digital literacy skills by the end of the 2014 school year. From that process we learned a lot that has informed our thinking and we have continued to pursue a full iPad program this year.

**Taking action:** September 2014 to June 2015

- got a full class set of iPads (wrote a proposal to our 131 committee for Aboriginal specific funding outside of our school funding and received support of a further 17 iPads) - September
- introduced the iPad program school wide for all teachers at the September staff meeting
- set out clear school wide iPad expectations and policies and explained those policies at meetings and posted to all staff mailboxes - September
- attended all department meetings to show teachers the possibilities and content specific apps that can be used – October (6 departments)
- collaborated with teachers to develop detailed unit/lesson plans (wherever possible with Aboriginal content) (14 staff members from HSS + 2 from MGA and 1 from Bear Valley)
- demonstrated the use of particular apps for the assignments to both teachers and students in a collaborative in class demo style
- shared excellent exemplars for students and discussed what makes it good (contact me for access to school wide Google Drive account)
- gave direct feedback throughout the process with written and conversational notes (following the notes set out on pages 74-75 of Regie Routman's *Read, Write, Lead*)
- worked with students to create their final project
- collaborated with teacher/students on assessment (how will we assess this? And building the rubric)
- hosted two professional development days - November (8 teachers + 2 FNSW attended and May (8 teachers + 2 FNSW attended)
- reflected on the process and got feedback from students and teachers as to how it went - May
- tracked engagement and connectedness through data and anecdotal evidence – May
- Celebrated our success at the NOII celebration and the June staff meeting

**Checking:** Did we make a difference? How do we know?

- 121 class blocks of iPad use were booked across all grades throughout this school year
- 78 students came in on their own time to finish iPad projects for teachers
- There was a 10% increase of project completion when using iPads - from the average of 75% in class to 85%, and a 20% increase in project completion when pairing iPads and Aboriginal specific content – up to 95%.
- 14 out of 23 staff members engaged in some sort of conversation about how to use this technology and ALL teachers who used it in a classroom setting said it made a difference in engagement and completion rates. There was also a reduction in behavior issues noticed in most classes

Our baseline was to have teachers report out on project completion rates prior to the introduction of iPads. Teachers also discussed classroom management issues and attempts by students to use their own time to complete projects prior to iPad introduction.

The resounding feedback from teachers is that we did make a difference and although it was a huge amount of work, we are satisfied with the result. The iPad program is an established program that will continue to run year after year at Hazelton Secondary, giving students a chance to show their knowledge in an alternative way.

### **Reflections/Advice:**

- This project is FAR larger than we ever expected it to be. We took on much more than I thought when we first started writing proposals.
- The speed of teacher engagement from the beginning to the end of this project was phenomenal at first there were 3 of us plus our VP, now the team is huge. Although they are at varying levels within the inquiry process they are all fully engaged in iPad use.
- The largest stumbling block has been helping the staff to feel confident and competent so that they will work together to develop a plan and use the iPads.
- We are teaching our curriculum on top of digital literacy skills that are transferrable and preparatory for life after high school.
- Sometimes the technical difficulties are overwhelmingly frustrating so we recommend a great deal of frontloaded organization beforehand.
- We recommend having the iPads be the responsibility of one person or a small team so that all things are cared for well. It would help if that person was digitally proficient, calm under stress, and good at troubleshooting quickly
- Setting up the school wide protocols/expectations and forms consumed a large chunk of frontloaded time. We are willing to share; contact me

### **Where to next?**

- More work with staff to build confidence and competence
- Continue collecting and storing a bank of lesson plans and exemplars
- Continue working with teachers from our school and other schools to help them use the iPads they have in a meaningful way. We have been asked to travel to Stewart and help set up their program in September. Also, two teachers from MGA have asked that we come and help them out next year.
- Host another iPad professional development day as requested by the staff
- Continue to sort out minor technical bugs like printing and document storage
- Continue to develop a great working relationship with our IT department
- Create an "Effective Feedback" crib sheet for both teachers and students to provide meaningful immediate feedback
- Keep abreast of new apps and digital literacy pedagogies
- Continue to engage in formative assessment and the Spiral of Inquiry

### **Preliminary thinking for next year's question:**

What would happen if we took the concept of "Genius Hour" from Google and set up our whole school so that students get 10% of their school time to pursue their own passions in a school setting and how would that look using the iPad program as one of many options? Judy and

Linda furthered my thinking to include mind mapping each student's strengths throughout the year and transforming the genius hour concept into a project with a community impact. This final idea falls in line with our department goals/ school growth plan goals/ and social responsibility performance standards.

Connection to Principles of Learning:

This project connects to many of the Principles of Learning in both the "First Nations Principles of Learning" (FNESC) and "The Nature of Learning" (OECD).

The project connects directly to our Local Education Agreement, sections:

- 2.2 Improve the academics and education delivery....
- 3.1 Decrease the suspension and drop-out rates for First nations students
- 3.2 Increase the number of First Nations students graduating with academic dogwood certificates.