



2014-2015 AESN Case Study

School: Nakusp Secondary **District:** #10 Arrow Lakes

Area of Focus: Enhancement Agreement

Inquiry Team Members: Julia Flesaker and Christian Barisoff

Our focus for this year: Learning supports the wellbeing of self, family, community, land, and spirits; and learning requires exploration of one's identity.

Scanning: There are 31 students in Home Room 8/Health and Career 8. They have just arrived in high school either from Nakusp Elementary (K-7), Lucerne Elementary Secondary School (K-12) or Edgewood Elementary (K-2 and 3-7). Nakusp Secondary School is a large school for some of these students and easing their transition is a primary focus of this course. Transitions can be difficult, especially if a student has special needs or anxiety. Suddenly students are in amongst senior students and they will need to feel comfortable with themselves in that situation. Educators want each student to feel like they have a place, are valued and important within our school.

Focus: Homeroom has not been offered in the last 13 years in the district. This year it is being combined with Health and Career 8 and only met for one hour a week. It is the only time that all of the grade 8 students are together in one room. We thought it was important for them to feel a sense of community within the school and connections with each other.

Hunch: The education system is contributing to the current situation by putting students suddenly into high school, part of the industrial education model. Educators are attempting to rectify the situation by providing a homeroom block and support systems within that hour for young students. Students need as many opportunities as possible to form strong bonds and relationships within the school community.

New professional learning: We learned about the role of the homeroom teacher and how to support students in health and educational choices. Homeroom teachers for grades 8 and 9 worked together to provide learning opportunities that integrated community members and resources with school curriculum. Health and Career was offered in an experiential and needs based manner.

Taking action: We involved many professional speakers including, our high school counsellor, sexual health educators, drug and alcohol counsellors, dance professionals, and community

elders to offer learning opportunities in multiple formats and delivery methods. Students examined health and educational issues that were relevant to themselves and that can be applied across multiple courses. In many cases because our homeroom block was Monday morning for an hour, community members had to meet with the students in other classes, so the project required the cooperation of many staff members.

Checking: We knew that we were making impact from the student reflections on completed activities and the feedback from students regarding the direction course material should take. Homeroom offers a lot of flexibility and it enabled us to more completely meet the needs of our students.

Reflections/Advice: Having only one hour a week and then many times losing that hour to school assemblies or presentations made it difficult to arrange speakers and form consistent and meaningful connections with students. Homeroom serves a valuable function within a school; however, students would prefer to meet more briefly every day and not need to cover curricular content. Homeroom should serve more of a communication and community piece within a school.