



2014 - 2015 AESN Case Study

School: Stawamus Elementary and Squamish Elementary

District: #48 Sea to Sky

Area of Focus: Enhancement Agreement

Inquiry Team Members: Lindsey Boresma, Leslie Drinovz, Sarah Hain, Naomi Radawiec

Scanning: We've noticed in community circles that students love to share their personal stories. Sharing memories often triggers connections amongst the group of learners and sparks interest in writing. We believe that a focus on storytelling will enhance student's oral language skills and positively impact their self-confidence. Giving students more opportunities to share their family story/culture, and providing a space to openly create their own narratives, will also help strengthen the community of learners. While many students in our classrooms are confident public speakers, we have a number of students that are hesitant to share and would benefit from a focus on oral story telling. We believe coaching students in story telling skills will improve their oral language development. Through exploring history and/or their own interests students will become more confident in sharing stories orally.

Focus: We focused on the importance of story in Aboriginal and other cultures, and on the First Peoples Principle: Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story. We provided opportunities for students to collaborate in the creation and communication of stories.

Hunch: We believe that oral language is often not valued enough in late primary and intermediate years. Reading and writing becomes a focus and oral language is not assessed as frequently (self/peer/teacher assessments). Lessons are based around reading and writing and there is a lack of oral language specific tasks. We believe that asking students to self or peer assess oral language skills would help them understand the importance of it. Oral language scoring guides/assessments could also help clarify learning intentions and criteria so that students understand aspects of good public speaking/storytelling. Students that can speak well are more likely to write well. Public speaking is also a very important skill that can be developed starting at a young age, rather than in later elementary years or high school. It is an essential skill that students will have to use in the majority of careers that they may choose.

New professional learning: We met as a team to share ideas, make plans and reflect on the learning. During the reflection process we shifted the lessons according to where the students were at in each classroom. Sarah and Naomi taught in the same Grade 3/4 class, and team

taught lessons focused on oral storytelling. We shared our stories with other classes and at other schools.

Our District Aboriginal Principal, Susan Leslie, helped support us in using appropriate circle protocol, promoting First Nations Culture and the First People Principles Learning, and in teaching students about successful learner traits using animal puppets.

We also used various literacy resources to plan lessons related to story structure, sequencing, and gathering ideas for writing stories.

Taking action:

- learned about story structure and sequencing
- created their own stories in groups using *Aboriginal Pals* puppets, prop baskets, and “Story Bags” (their own props from home)
- recorded their stories using technology
- wrote stories that they told orally (Story necklaces and writing on prompt cards)
- learned the difference between climbing stories (with a plot) and walking stories
- learned public speaking skills and what makes a good storyteller (expression, volume, pauses)
- talked about what makes a good story
- co-created a storytelling scoring guide with the students based on an oral language guide.
- focused on Aboriginal storytelling (learn stories from our local First Nations *Skwxwú7mesh* People)
- used puppets to reflect on successful learner traits and set personal goals
- learned about character traits
- created and described characters of their own through storytelling
- shared personal stories and reflected on their learning about storytelling during community circle

Checking: We co-created a “Storytelling Scoring Guide” with students to use as peer or self assessments (and for teachers to assess the students). This criteria in the Storytelling guide related to public speaking goals (e.g., volume, clarity, expression), story structure/elements (e.g., did the storyteller include a problem?), or other aspects of telling a story.

The videos filmed on ipads were also great tools for taking a closer look and assessing where the students were at.

We noticed that students no longer mumble and have acquired public speaking and storytelling skills. They are able to tell a story from start to finish without prompting from a teacher.

Two shy students (one Aboriginal) have started to create and share really interesting and well-developed stories. They seem to have gained self-confidence and this has made them more comfortable about speaking to the class.

Students learned how to take turns while sharing ideas in a group. They seemed at ease contributing to discussions and making sure everyone had a say. Students were able to feed off of each others ideas and ask questions to develop the story. We learned that the next step could be to support students in asking more purposeful questions.

Reflections: We will continue and deepen this work next year.