

## 2014 - 2015 NOII Inquiry Case Study



**School:** Deroche Elementary    **District:** #75 Mission

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**Our focus area:** Story writing using oral story telling with students of First Nations heritage – year two.

Approximately, 2/3 of our students have First Nations heritage. We found in the past that many of our students had difficulty relating to the materials provided to them for their learning and were reluctant writers. This was mostly true for our non-native students as well. In reaction to this, we purchased many Aboriginal resources for our library and classroom sets for teaching. Siwalsiwes, district program, also provided some funding to buy Aboriginal content resources as well.

**Scanning:** Last year we focused on story writing using oral story tellers from the community. We made an assumption that having oral story telling which is culturally relevant for our Aboriginal learners, would have a positive influence on our learners and motivate them to write. We were correct in our thinking as students produced writing with a beginning, middle and end structure. Most of the students improved from previous to post comparisons. We found that the students responded well to the oral story tellers and were motivated to write their own stories.

**Focus:** With a focus on intentionally taught writing elements (6 + 1 traits, R Cullen) will the inclusion of Aboriginal literature (fiction and non-fiction) with reading and oral storytelling, motivate and inspire students to improve their own writing skills, specifically in the area of creative writing? Last year we focused on story structure with beginning, middle, and end. Most students made progress with post test results. This year we focused on adding the element of voice in the story writing.

**Hunch:** Stretching all learners.....

Several of the students enjoyed writing and continued the enthusiasm from the year before. We wanted to continue with the work we were doing while stretching the previous learning. Many of the students were eager to write but we still had some students who needed a nudge. Also the Kindergarten students were new to everything. We included all of our students in the study. Each of our learners was in different places in their writing, no matter what grade level. As a concentration we focused on Stretching all learners – every learner is asked to do hard

work and accept challenges – but each learner is not overloaded. It’s important to motivate learners to move forward from their own starting gate but at the same time important not to overwhelm the learner to the point of shutting down. Stretching all learners with scaffolding proved to be a good strategy to encourage emerging and developing and somewhat reluctant writers by building on skills and prior knowledge.

**New professional learning:** We used our staff development meeting time to review the study. Each staff member used the 6+1 traits for writing for their grade level. Together we learned about different types of voice and how to help children learn, understand and develop their own voice in their story-telling and writing.

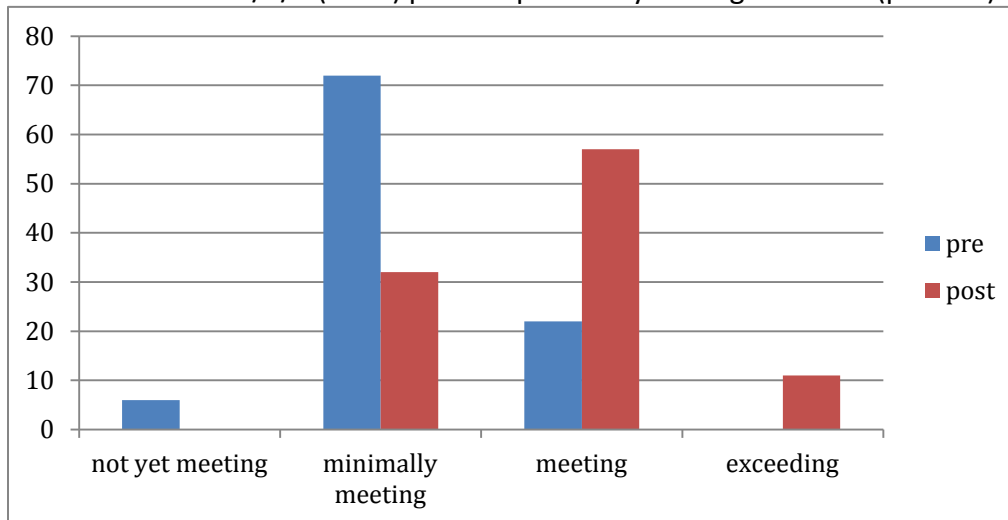
**Taking action:** We collected a writing sample from each student and used the rubric in the 6+1 traits by Cullen to assess each story for voice. They had the fortunate experience to once again listen to expert story telling by elders Vikki Leibrecht and Elspeth Bowers. This is the second year the story tellers came to our school to tell stories aloud to our students. We chose books for read aloud that are recognized for having a voice. The younger students in grades k/1 had stories told to them aloud from their teacher. Students had several stories read aloud and shared with them. Students also read stories to each other during buddy reading time. With the students in grades 4-6 we added the lessons in the story writing section of the traits resource for teaching voice.

A final story was collected from each student with an illustration included. Some students created and typed out their own story while adaptations were made for some students to tell the story orally to an adult who recorded the story on a word processor. Each of the students in K/1 told a story orally to an adult and drew a picture.

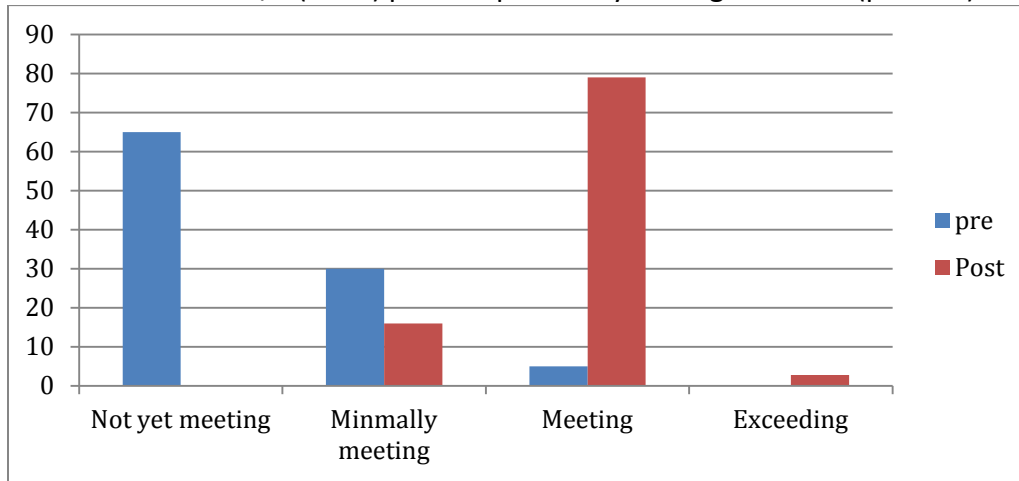
**Checking:**

Our data collection showed a growth in each of the children’s write using a pre and post write comparison. We assessed the writing using the 6+1 traits rubric for voice.

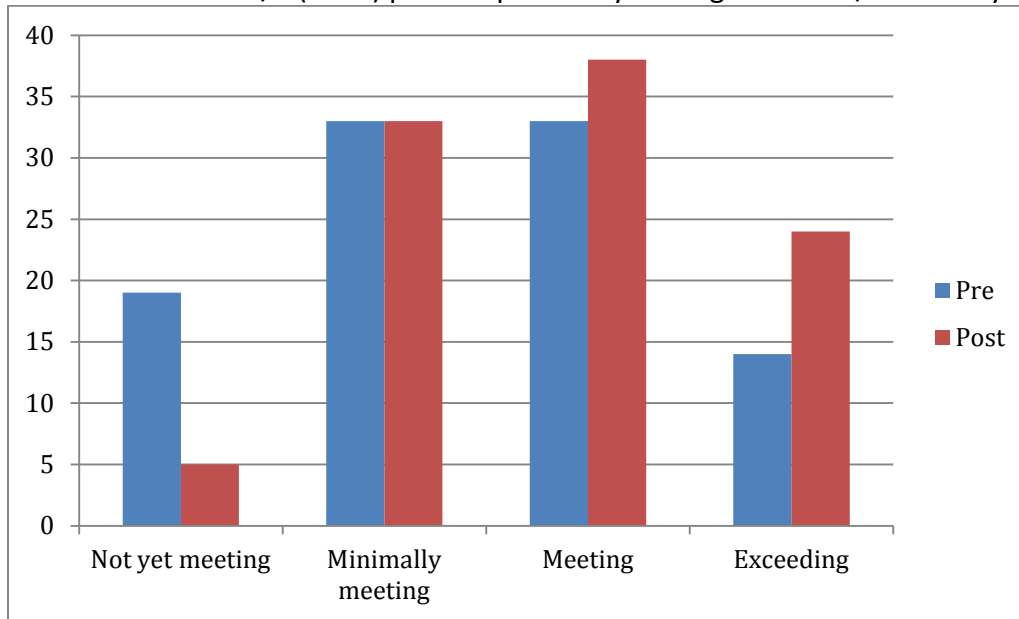
Division 1 Grades 4/5/6 (n=28) pre and post story writing for Voice (percent)



Division 2: Grades 2/3 (n=19) pre and post story writing for Voice (percent)



Division 3: Grades K/1 (n=21) pre and post story writing for Voice / Oral story telling



**Reflections/Advice:** As this was the second year with this inquiry, we had an idea of how we were going to proceed. Two of our teachers, half our teaching staff, were new to the process. In hindsight it would be best to review the previous project plan as a group and use a tight timeline. We had less collaboration as a team but the results were still significant. As students each create stories at various levels of development, so do teachers teach and understand how to teach writing with various individuality and ability. It helps to use a program such as 6+1 traits to keep everyone on a similar path.

We used some of the grant money to publish an anthology including a story and illustration from each student from the 2013-14 collection. Every family received a book. The students were very proud of their writing. Some noticed that the stories they wrote were not as

developed as they could write now in an older grade. This anthology was distributed to the students at an Author's assembly where the whole school was treated to stories by guests, Vikki and Elspeth.



Elspeth Bowers – story teller

Whatever you do with students, find a way to celebrate their learning with them. The parents loved the book and asked if we could make another one this year. We collected a story from every child this year along with a picture and hope to produce a second anthology of Deroche Stories for everyone to share and enjoy.

Our school growth plan has a strong focus on literacy. Inquiry projects for writing focus our efforts and provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate around successful strategies. Of particular note, we have observed more student success in the area of writing with the implementation of laptops for planning, proofreading and editing over the last two years. We are fortunate to get an adapted writing lab from SET BC next year to assist our students with low reading and writing skills. A handful of our students have a learning disability.

Many of our students enjoy writing and like using the word processor to collect their work. They are excited to write and to share their work with each other. Next year we will continue our adventure with writing. Deroche will have a whole new staff next year so we will collect ourselves together with a review of school goals and determine how our inquiry will take shape.