

## 2014 - 2015 NOII Inquiry Case Study



**School:** Ecole Oceanside Elementary    **District:** #69 Qualicum

**Inquiry Team Members:** Linda Greig, Larissa Howlett,  
Sarah Hung, Anne Jenkins

**Scanning:** In the fall of 2014, we set out to determine how to best support and encourage the development of critical thinking skills and self-regulation. Utilizing a variety of tools we developed a whole child picture of learning strengths and needs for each of our students. During this process, we recognized that our classroom community is composed of unique learners with their own strengths, needs and passions. We also ascertained that the class would benefit from exposure to problem solving strategies, self-assessment and opportunities to engage with topics of interest.

**Focus:** During our inquiry, we focused on *Assessment for learning as a way of life*. By making assessment an integral part of the planning and delivery of curriculum, we hoped to encourage students to become self-directed learners. We also believe that the development of the ability to conduct self-evaluations marks the shift from teacher-directed learning, where students are passive, to an active self-regulatory process in which students become accountable for their learning. Being able to recognize what you have learned, how you learn, and to predict future learning needs is vital to the development of self-regulated learners.

**Hunch:** It was important that we recognized that our learners do not necessarily learn in the same way. This involves thinking about the classroom with the dual goals of honoring each student's learning needs and maximizing each student's learning capacity. By providing for the learning and behavioural needs of our students, we hoped to facilitate a sense of belonging, fun, empowerment, safety, and freedom within our classroom and school.

**New professional learning:** During the 2014/15 school year, our teacher community explored social, emotional, and self-regulatory strategies and skills through the *MindUP Curriculum*. As an inquiry team we read *Mindset* by Carol Dweck, *Calm, Alert and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation* by Stuart Shanker and *Making Just One Change* by Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana. We also utilized Karen Hume's *Start Where They Are* to develop a learning profile.

**Taking action:** By utilizing Karen Hume's *Start Where They Are* and a variety of academic screening tools (ex. words their way, DMA) we were able to establish the learning preferences, interests, and readiness of each learner. Empowered with this information, our students were able to work as responsible members of our classroom community, by identifying their learning

preferences and appreciating diversity. Students also utilized this information to develop their first inquiry project.

**Checking:** During their inquiry, we (as a class) designed individual self-assessment criteria and peer review practices. This allowed the students to take ownership of their learning, determining their future learning goals and build accountability. By utilizing informal and ongoing assessment we, as teachers, were able to provide regular constructive feedback while fostering a 'growth' mindset. As the year progressed, we observed and recorded greater student engagement and positive gains in self-regulation and social responsibility. Nevertheless, there were approaches that we had hoped to explore further, but did not accomplish. For example, flexibility in assessment was constrained by traditional reporting standards. As we move forward, we would like to further explore the possibility of portfolio reporting. In place of a formal written report card, we would like to meet with students and their families for a reporting conference. Through the use of student portfolios, we would like to encourage student led conferences and the development of individual learning plans.

**Reflections/Advice:** During our inquiry, we continued to develop and strengthen our understanding of personalized learning, and gained greater insight in to our students' learning needs. We believe, that our exploration helped us deliver instruction at a level that was appropriate and facilitated success. As we continue our learning journey, we would like to read Carol Ann Tomlinson's *Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom*, Carol Kuhlthau's *Guided Inquiry: Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and Kathleen Gregory's trio of books on assessment and goal setting. As we conclude the year, we are committed to continuing to determine how to best support and encourage the development of critical thinking skills and self-regulation.