

2014-2015 AESN Case Study



School Name: Guildford Park Secondary **District:** #36 Surrey

Area of Focus: Transitions

Inquiry Team Members: Carrie Carlsen, Kristin Dorey, Gail Manning, Kim Monsanto, Michael Stickley, and Brenda Vandal

Question/Focus: How will a focus on Grade 7 social and emotional wellness and cultural connectedness improve attendance and academic success?

Scanning: We have found that our students are really struggling to make the transition from elementary school to secondary school. We are also noticing that some students coming from elementary school are not connected to the resources necessary in high school, and struggle with the change in structure. We know this because of their lack of connection to support staff, their inability to advocate for themselves, and issues around academic success, and maintaining regular attendance. What is working is getting students the adequate in class support from the Aboriginal Department, as well as LST, when appropriate. We need to continue to work on transitioning students socially and emotionally to this larger setting.

Focus: We will focus on early interventions and relationship building with students. We will focus on having students prepared socially for their transition by connecting them to the adults in the building, as well as older peers. We also want to spend time focusing on relationships, so that students feel that they are cared for at Guildford Park, and believe that they can be successful.

Hunch: Our hunch is that as adults in the school, we must be proactive in our interventions with students around academic, social and emotional challenges. We are striving to reach out as much as possible to students prior to their entry into the school, because we are noticing that by the time students come to high school, it is difficult to change behaviors and patterns and students can become entrenched with negative groups.

New professional learning: Staff attended the Musquem Professional Learning day to learn how to make drums, as well as proper drum etiquette. This new knowledge will become the foundation of our drum project. We have also utilized other professional development opportunities for dealing with our students with the most need. In particular, staff attended a Professional Development day presented by the staff of Lee School, in order to gain greater understanding of youth mental health.

Taking action: We are going to have more transition opportunities for students in the remaining month where students will continue to work with their older buddies (Grade 8-11) who will be there in the fall when the grade 7s become grade 8s. Already, this has proved a

tremendous asset to this project. We saw some of our high school volunteers excel and be engaged, responsible, role models. The elementary school students looked to the older students for guidance, and were respectful and open to building a new relationship. We are incorporating a drum project that will be with the Grade 8s-11s this year, with the goal being that they become the mentors for the new students.

Checking: We held an all-day Grade 7 Aboriginal Open House in which students made First Nations art with support from the Katzie Nation with the help of Lisa Starr. We had Aboriginal student leaders from Grade 8-12 supporting and getting to know the Grade 7 students through the day. Students had lunch, and then began stations where they learned to read our timetable and schedules, open a locker, had a school tour, and responded to a survey. This survey is our baseline, which will allow us to know how much of a difference we are able to make in the second phase of our study heading into June in which we will be doing lots of activities and visits with the Grade 7s. We will also continue with our study in September. Currently, 27% of students do not feel successful in school. Students that said they did not feel successful mostly attributed that to not putting in effort or getting assignments completed. Of the grade 7s polled, 35% said they could not name two adults at their school who cares about them and believes they'll be successful. We are looking to improve the student and staff relationships. We believe that if this number is higher, it will lead to greater all-around school success.

Do you currently feel successful in school?

Answer Choices–	Responses–
Yes	73% (16)
No	27% (6)
Total Respondents: 22	

Can you name two adults (teachers, counsellors, principals, youth care workers) at your school who care about you and believe you will be successful?

Answer Choices–	Responses–
No	35% (8)
Yes	65% (15)
Total Respondents: 23	

Reflections/Advice: We learned the value of having older students participate in a leadership role. We also learned where the Grade 7s would like this to go. Based on their survey responses, they want to spend more time at Guildford Park, they want to connect with their teachers for next year, and they would like to spend more time with the Aboriginal staff here. I would recommend that all schools focus on transitions so specifically and actively engage older students to play a major role in the transition.