



2015-2016 AESN Case Study

School: City Central Learning Centre

District: #36 Surrey

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Our focus for this year: Our focus this year was on transitions using a student perspective to guide our actions.

Scanning: We chose to start with the four key questions to provide us with direction in our inquiry. We selected a range of students to include in the survey: male/female, senior/junior with a variety of registration dates at CCLC ranging from one week to several years. The scanning through the lens of the questions made us realize that we needed to delve into reasons for connectedness or lack of connectedness to explore student responses in greater depth. Our thinking was guided by the First Peoples Principles of Learning: "Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)." A meeting was set up with a group of five new students to discuss how students felt coming into CCLC. The overwhelming theme that emerged was that students felt safe at CCLC. The notion of safety was specifically applied to individual identity; the students felt they could express who they were without judgement or recrimination. One student said: "I can't emphasize the amount of safety here." Four of the five students could identify someone in the building they could turn to for support. This provided some insight into how important it is to start with relationship building to enable students to eventually be able to identify adults in the building who believed they would be successful. The students also showed an appreciation for the specific events that made them feel safe and welcome at CCLC, being greeted daily and access to food (snacks at breaks in a common area).

Focus: The notion of transitions felt like a natural direction for our inquiry. Our continuous entry model lends itself to a constant process of transition. Students coming to CCLC are transitioning with a variety of experiences:

- Transition from mainstream school to learning centre
- Transition from no school or work to learning centre
- Transition exploring new life directions
- Transition in identity

We were hoping to enhance their transition experience to help them be successful socially, emotionally and academically. We were hoping that our students' transition experience would be enhanced by engaging them in activities and routines that would increase their connections to the CCLC community.

Hunch: Although our team believed that students felt safe and valued at CCLC we also realized that we lacked a formal, focused plan to create deliberate, intentional opportunities to increase and enhance student connectedness to the school community. Students are not assigned a permanent staff mentor nor did we have regular routines that provide the opportunity for students to discuss their progress and goals with a staff mentor.

New professional learning: Our team focused on the area of formative assessment to increase the dialogue opportunities between staff and students. We continued to develop a tool we had been working on for interim reporting. The assessment tool focuses on student perception and responses to their learning in the initial stages of the semester. Students complete a self-assessment document followed by an individual session with the teacher/mentor to discuss their progress. The student's family is then provided with the opportunity to meet as a triad group to review the assessment through additional dialogue and conversation.

Taking action: The reporting team met several times to revise and debrief the results of the interim process. Teachers individualized the form and process to suit student and class needs. The interview process was also tailored to meet classroom and student needs. The interview process was most beneficial for students working independently as part of the continuous entry model. Students working in 'pod' groups had opportunities built into their classroom routines to explore assessment as a group and individually. Teachers reported that the opportunity to engage with students individually to discuss their academic progress also expanded the opportunity for conversations around social and emotional learning. We will continue to sustain the student/teacher/parent dialogue as part of the interim reporting process.

Checking: Our group reached consensus: "We are not done with this inquiry!" There are enough differences to justify a continuance of this line of inquiry. It is definitely beneficial to increase the dialogue opportunities for students to discuss their learning (socially, emotionally and academically). We would like to see these dialogue opportunities increase and be practiced in a more systematic matter so that it becomes a routine part of the CCLC culture. The interim reporting period is established. Can we seek additional opportunities to have these conversations on an ongoing basis?

We also realized that we need to become more systematic in our approach to ensuring our plans are followed. At our December meeting we identified a plan to support students to connect with community to enhance their learning experience. We were going to target three of our original survey group of students to pair up with a teacher/mentor for the year and follow and support their progress. This plan did not get started. We recognize that creating routines to increase our accountability would be helpful.

The student responses to the four questions was richer and provided ideas for further inquiry and exploration. Several of the responses will be springboards for further action. One student who continued to report that he could not identify two adults in the building who believed he would be a success had a more positive view of his learning. Initial response to "How are you doing?" - "I don't think I'm doing as well as I should be mostly because I have difficulty to focus and complete work. Also anxiety and ADD are good with interfering with learning, sadly." On the second response he replied to the same question: "I'm doing fine. I feel like I'm in a much better situation of a year ago. It doesn't feel like a struggle to survive a school day." This made us realize that we have further questions to explore around students who do not identify adults who believe in their success. His self-perception has changed; it would be beneficial to continue the dialogue to pinpoint what the student believes has supported his growth.

We also noted that two additional students who identified adults who believed in their success in both surveys added two new adults to their list. This also felt like a positive addition to student learning. Students appear to be moving forward in their learning through additional supportive relationships with significant adults.

Reflections/Advice:

One of our team members summed up one of our learnings well: “Little things make a big difference.” This opened up the dialogue around the students’ feedback which we have not acted on. Students informed us that being greeted every day was a positive experience. Are we doing this in an intentional way or is it a by-product of our community that is practiced to varying degrees depending on circumstances? Can we explore ways to implement some of these small changes in a systematic manner? What are the ways we can seek data that provides us with meaningful feedback to gauge the success?

We recognize the importance of connections to the First Peoples Principles of Learning. It is important to identify principles within this document that pertain to the inquiry and keep the principles at the core. The statement that resonated with our group was “Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).”

The key points out of this statement have guided our actions in a meaningful way. Building community through relationships is pivotal to success.
The conversation continues....