



2015-2016 AESN Case Study

School: Deroche Elementary

District: #75 Mission

Inquiry Team Members: M. Abercrombie and Deroche Team

Contact: M. Abercrombie

Our focus for this year is to bring a sense of urgency to reading instruction and remediation. Deroche Elementary is 73% Aboriginal, most kids coming from three Reserves.

How can Deroche Elementary School promote and inform collaborative investigation and planning pertaining to:

- Improving our students' reading skills utilizing Aboriginal cultural content, pedagogy, and relying on the local retired community.
- How can we use data in a culturally appropriate way?
- How can we enhance reading skills through creating other venues for reading that are more connected to the environment and culture our children live in?

Scanning: Our job was to verify the figures our previous school leader had given us, stated below, and to better define the extent of the problem. In other words, "how far below grade level". As well, we needed to look at the reasons for the reading problem.

Focus: We had an Education Assistant (EA) practicum student, who had been trained by her previous school, conduct Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) tests on all of our 72 students.

Hunch: We were not prepared for the results of the DRA. It showed us that out of 40 grade 1-4 students, 28 (70%) were below grade level in reading. However, 21 were 1-3 years behind which definitely underlined the hunch that we had an emergency situation. Indeed, our instruction at these levels was plagued by kids having difficulty with being engaged with any learning that involved reading or written output.

New professional learning: By addressing this problem in a way which is data driven, we are going to learn what reading interventions work and which do not. We will also be able to look at the common background factors of students who struggle with reading and explore what strategies and interventions can be used to remedy some root causes. Finally, we will be able to see how well the DRA measures reading, and we have adopted "Reading Recovery" as our main (of three intervention strategies) technique to deal with the problem within a three-month period.

Taking action: We devised three intervention strategies to attempt to immediately address our 21 most vulnerable learners

Action Plan:

(1) Daily Intensive Reading

- (a) We recruited six adult volunteers (mainly from our retired community), who could read with our children from 1 to 3 hours per day.



(b) We prepared "reading bags filled with three or four books that were each at the DRA reading level of each student. This allowed our volunteer readers to quickly retrieve each child's bag and utilize skill appropriate reading materials.



(c) Our volunteers did a wonderful job listening to 21 children read to them for about 15-20 minutes each per day.



(d) We contracted the same EA to retest the children in late May, the results of which will guide if and how this program will be repeated

2) Wednesday Afternoon Literacy Rotation

(a) We divided our school into nine groups according to our DRA reading level data.

(b) We clumped each group into pods of three and did a three station rotation amongst the three groups in the pod. The three stations are each focusing an aspect of reading such as phonics, comprehensions, connections, guided reading and vocabulary. Our goal was to have children with below level reading skills be with their age groupings to receive appropriate instruction without being made to sit with much younger children.

(c) For 25 minutes each, the students would rotate around three stations every Wednesday afternoon.

3) Home Reading Program

This program is run at numerous other schools. We began our first month in March

Checking: Our hunch is that our results will disappoint us because we hope all our students will have improved several grade levels. We should see some improvement, but what was very exciting about our inquiry was the amount of collaboration it required. We feel we are forming a professional learning community which will be able to continually collect and analyze data to improve our instruction and our children's' learning.

Our hunch as to causation of our reading crisis is NOT related to cultural differences. We think the enemy which is plaguing our Aboriginal children's motivation to, and skill at, reading, is the same as that which is preying upon other non-Aboriginal children, but is more damaging on Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal students. The cause we think that is reaping havoc is the rise of electronic media in general, and electronic games in particular. For example, recent anecdotal data demonstrated that our students could say more about four video games than they could about the characteristics and connections with the four seasons. In fact, many could not name the four seasons.

A question then is how to use young people's addiction to electronic gaming as a means to improve their reading skills, or is it better to attempt to influence parents to ban it all together.

Reflections/Advice: Thank you for the stimulation to keep posing questions of ourselves and practices. We hope and will commit to reporting our reading testing results in early June and as well report to you what we have learned from our data adjustments.