



2015-2016 AESN Case Study

School: Mary Jane Shannon Elementary **District:** #36 Surrey

Inquiry Team Members: Celine Feazel, Allison Hotti, Julia Thompson

Our focus for this year: Our focus area was math as a reflective practice grounded in community.

Scanning: When we did our scanning phase we noticed that math was being treated as an isolated learning area that did not foster broader connections to the world around our students. When discussing math, we noticed that our students are providing us with a superficial idea of what math is such as “we are learning about adding and subtracting” when this area has yet to be addressed. We felt that the way we delivered Math this year changed and the students developed a deeper understanding about the concepts taught and were able to apply them and connect them during non-Math teaching times. We focused on the First Peoples Principle of learning, “Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)” during the scanning process thinking that it would address the concerns we had.

Focus: We wanted to develop a deeper understanding of the Principles of Learning by focusing on one to embed in our practice in a meaningful way. For the past two years we participated in the AESN inquiry with a broader focus on the principles of learning and from those experiences we decided to narrow our focus to one principal of learning to develop a more meaningful understanding for our learners. We chose math as a focus because we would like it to be holistic and for children to understand the connections between numeracy, shared knowledge and interaction, and place within their community.

Hunch: We feel that math is often treated as an isolated subject that does not involve sharing knowledge with others as well as other subject areas, or seeing it in the community around them. We feel that this has fostered a superficial understanding of the role of numeracy in their lives.

New professional learning: We hope that by establishing connections within our educational community and discussing these connections with our students, we will be modeling the interconnected nature of the new curriculum. We collaborated with district staff, discussed ideas with Surrey Helping teachers, attended math conferences, and made use of the Reggio math tubs. We also used the book, “Taan’s Moons” and connected it to the Saanich Year kit to create our own Surrey territory specific project about what happens here on each full moon. We worked to access and connect with seasonal changes, witnessed in the adjacent forested parkland space, to allow for the cross-integration of Big Ideas between content areas including Science, Math Reading and Writing. This was supported with use of anchor texts which shared themes of *place*. These texts included, among others, A Walk, We Feel Good Out Here, Shin-chi’s Canoe, Shi-shi-etko, and My Name is Seepetza.

Taking action: While exploring the concept of keeping track of time through the full moons we sourced out quality resources and shared the information in many ways with the students but did not have a final destination in mind. The project took on a life of its own and we co-created the idea for the final felt design. This gave the students ownership over the project and they had a great pride in their finished work.

Checking: We feel that this project has exceeded any expectations that we had. The richness of the students' knowledge about how the Sto:lo people lived 1000 years ago here on this land and how we live on the same land now has blown us away. The answers to the four questions were richer but the true measure is in how the students could articulate their knowledge in the video.

Reflections/Advice: We learned that giving the students the freedom to co-create their learning experience lets them develop deeper and more meaningful knowledge and creates a community of learning where they take on more responsibility and leadership. We would like to create more of these opportunities and explore different Principles of Learning next year using this inquiry process. Advice to other schools would be to not be afraid to think outside of the box and take risks with your teaching. Also, to not be afraid to teach Aboriginal content, just educate yourself as best you can and go for it!