



2015-2016 AESN Case Study

School: Nakusp Secondary School

District: #10 Arrow Lakes

Inquiry Team Members: Julia Flesaker, Jaime Sing

Contacts: Julia.flesaker@sd10.bc.ca, Jaime.sing@sd10.bc.ca

Our focus for this year: We will incorporate Aboriginal ways of knowing your body and medicine into the human systems units. We will include traditional views on health and medicine within the curriculum.

Scanning: We have seen a lack of connection between the students and the course content. They are struggling to internalize the material. The questions that we found most helpful during this process were the ones focusing on purpose: “Where are you going with your learning? and Where are you going next with your learning?” All curriculums are integrating Aboriginal components and students are interested in exploring this aspect of human biology. We have spoken with 10 students of the 14 in the class.

Focus: The draft of the revised Integrated Resource Package (IRP) incorporates Aboriginal studies in all subject areas. We will incorporate Aboriginal ways of knowing your body and medicine into the human systems units. We will include traditional views on health and medicine within the curriculum. I believe this will help students understand the material in more meaningful ways and facilitate connections with all learners.

Hunch: These students have not had the opportunity to take Biology 11. Biology is a content and vocabulary heavy course that builds upon itself as the year progresses. Students began the year with a flipped classroom, where they received the notes at home and were expected to do the readings on their own time so class could be devoted to questions, assignments and labs. We found that students were not learning the material this way. We think the students need a holistic approach to learning about the human body that is more collective and interactive, placing less onus on the individual student.

New professional learning: We researched Aboriginal and alternative forms of medicine and traditional views on the human body and then integrating this into the Human Body Unit. We used the medicine wheel resources and collaborated with the Learning Resource Teacher, First Nations 12 teacher, and the Aboriginal Support Teacher on instructional strategies and diversifying learning opportunities.

Taking action: The LRT was a great support because she did not have a background in Biology and was able to break the content down during lessons and provide an access point for all learners. Many students had misconceptions about holistic medicine. We began with creating an understanding of how to examine the human body holistically. This promoted a lot of discussion and sharing.

Checking: We had students complete a survey. Our baseline data consisted of an opinion essay on the value of holistic thinking in medicine. This also served an entry point for class

discussions on the topic. The survey was used to identify change in student thinking. Students ended the year believing that they understood holistic thinking. Students understood the health components the medicine wheel's cardinal directions: emotional, spiritual, mental and physical health. However, making deep connections and appreciating the validity of the four aspects was difficult. The spiritual and emotional health components were especially challenging for them to apply to their learning about human systems.

Reflections/Advice: Next year we will begin with this unit in Biology 12 and then continue referring to it throughout the year. This will be especially useful when covering biochemistry and DNA and the cell because students typically have a difficult time learning or making connection with this subject matter. We will continue to use the medicine wheel to help foster deeper thinking and appreciation for traditional Aboriginal knowledge. We will continue to search for teaching resources incorporating human health and Aboriginal studies.