



2015-2016 AESN Case Study

School: Pleasant Valley Elementary

District: #68 Nanaimo Ladysmith

Inquiry Team Members: Kathy Bergman, Donna Gannon,
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Our focus for this year: Our focus this year was fostering the development of our school community, with a lens on Aboriginal students, through purposeful and meaningful learning within the four areas of AEAA.

Scanning: As a whole school we developed lessons around the Maori of New Zealand and incorporated those lessons into a yearlong design that included a September start up week, six multi-age clan based activities, along with a yearend celebration. Our learners created, they read, they wrote, they danced and they grew through the multi-sensory experiences.

The students surveyed felt they were doing well academically, that they could access the adults they named to assist them in academic areas, the adults knew their interests outside of school, and were able to be an “ear” for them if they had problems or difficulties.

One student felt she had better self-regulation and was now able to wait her turn, as well as focus on her work quality and participate calmly in discussions. Another student felt she was better served in small group work and independent projects.

Students felt they were doing very well. Report card results were important to them, but one student in particular felt that teacher comments on daily work were valuable. Students used the criteria given to them by classroom teachers to help them in project work; they liked the infrastructure that criteria provided.

One student felt she was ready to transition to secondary school. She had been accepted to an academy and knows she will have to focus on sports rather than hanging out with friends. Another student recognized she needs to focus more in class and is wondering how to do this.

We noticed that the students seemed to be taking more ownership of their learning, but still relied on teachers for direction and support.

Throughout the year classroom, clan, and independent opportunities were offered to develop First Peoples Principles of Learning. In the students we surveyed we noticed comments related to mind (understanding), body (belonging), emotion (participation) and spirit (academic).

Focus: We selected the focus on the Maori peoples because we were widening our lens to include other indigenous peoples, not just those from North America. We were hoping to expand and broaden the learners’ knowledge of, and connections to, the Maori.

Hunch: We thought that by examining the Maori people our students would develop an understanding of the aspects of Maori culture that are both similar and dissimilar to their own.

New professional learning: We explored art, science, language arts, socials, dance, and food of the Maori. We ordered many materials directly from a book store in New Zealand that specialized in Maori culture. A grandmother of two students at our school sent a “care” package containing many resources we could use in classrooms and for clan activities. We accessed two women who taught Maori dance and languages and then celebrated with a whole school participatory performance.

Taking action: We focused on improving literacy, including reading comprehension in the intermediate grades and the Daily Five for primary classes.

Checking: Anecdotally teachers have noted an improvement in reading comprehension and reading fluency. Students were assessed by teachers in connecting, visualizing, questioning, inferring, determining importance in text and synthesizing. We used the primary and intermediate Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (NLPS) as well as PM Benchmarks (reading assessment) to inform ourselves and students of their progress. The potluck and picnic were well attended by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families. Aboriginal student attendance for regular school days is still a concern to teachers.

Reflections/Advice: Our school plans to return to its “roots” of Coast Salish First Nations in September of 2016. We have designed a week long September start up focusing on the Coast Salish peoples through the clan animal attributes as defined by Dr. Martin Brokenleg. We will continue to create, develop, and implement a yearlong set of clan activities to foster an awareness of the Coast Salish peoples.