



2015-2016 AESN Case Study

School: Port Edward Community School **District:** #52 Prince Rupert

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Our focus for this year: Early Literacy is our focus, in particular, improving reading ability of the grades 1 and 2 students.

Scanning: We had concerns about so many of our students not meeting widely held expectations in reading by the end of grade one and beyond. We noticed that many of them were coming into Kindergarten as vulnerable learners and seemed to be making progress by the end of their kindergarten year, but continued to struggle with meeting targets for reading. We questioned what we needed to change in our instruction that could make a positive difference in the results.

Four Key Questions: Being a very small school, we get very close to our students. In the class we targeted there were only ten students. Every adult here in the building enjoys close relationships with each of them. We have parents who are also involved quite closely with the class. These relationships foster and develop confidence in our learner's sense of belonging to our school. The school population totals 23, so these children often feel supported by their older peers as well.

We complete many outdoor activities, nature walks and daily walks around the community as a tool for mindfulness which supports our belief in the students need for focus and enjoyment of their surroundings. We walk before we start school, after recess and after lunch before our learning activities. This has been very successful in helping our students engage with nature and with their learning.

We used the First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the land, the spirits and the ancestors.
- Learning involves patience and time.
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity.

Focus: Our focus came as a result of a reading summit we attended together in Vancouver about reading results achieved in some districts using specific reading strategies. We were curious about using these strategies with our students in our classrooms. Our focus was on the use of games to help the students gain fluency of sight words which we hoped would increase their reading skills.

Hunch: We had a hunch that we were practicing good instruction and providing supports for our students; however, we wondered if we couldn't focus our instruction in a more cohesive and targeted way. We also had an idea that we may not be setting our bar high enough and that perhaps our own bias about vulnerable learners may get in the way of what our students could really achieve.

New professional learning: We attended a reading conference on the researched use of games and strategies that focused on getting students to know their alphabet in four ways (see it, sound it, find it and write it) as well as to have students develop fluency in sight word recall as early as Kindergarten. The research was compelling and we were intrigued. We decided to give it a try and began to develop a real focus on this type of fluency with our struggling readers. We bought and used the book, *Joyful Literacy Interventions, Early Learning Classroom Essentials*. We began to practice and develop these strategies with our whole early learning class (two Kindergartens, two grade ones, and five grade twos). We had already been using strategies from *Catching Readers Before They Fall*, with its three key questions in decoding words: Does it make sense? Does it sound right? Does it look right?

Taking action:

- Attended the session in October in Vancouver; purchased the accompanying resources.
- Decided on how we would approach the learning.
 - Focused on the grade two’s first with word fluency.
 - Assigned scheduled time during the day to work for center work on word work. *(This was also a difficult thing to keep up with and we settled into a routine of about two or three times weekly with the center work.)*
 - Took a baseline on words that they know. Completed the Circle Charts.
 - Decided that we would assess every week as the program suggested, however, we learned that this was difficult to keep up with and usually assessed every three to four weeks.
 - Made some game type centers that students could use. *(Students started to make their own games eventually.)*
 - Made booklets of the words and students became a bit obsessed about learning them which is something we did not count on but really helped.
 - Practiced. Practiced. Practiced.
 - Continued with work in sound based instruction (rhyming, beginning and ending sounds...).
 - Focused on guided reading group work weekly. (Instructional Level).
 - Made sure that students read to someone daily, books at their level.
 - Tried to have students prepare a reading selection for “Author’s Chair” bi-weekly.

Checking:

Student	Bmark June 2014	Growth Bmark June 2015	Growth Bmark June 2016	First Report # Dolch	Second Report # Dolch	Third Report # Dolch
Student A Grade 1	N/A	+3	+5	60	92	122
Student B Grade 1	N/A	+4	+6	60	89	130
Student C Grade 2	Didn’t know all the alphabet Unable to Benchmark	+3	+5	60	85	109
Student D Grade 2	Didn’t know all the alphabet Unable to Benchmark	+2	+5	50	85	132

Student E Grade 2	Didn't know all the alphabet Unable to Benchmark	+3	+5	70	92	170
Student F Grade 2	Didn't know all the alphabet Unable to Benchmark	+3	+5	70	90	125

Pre Primer: 0 to 40
Primer: 40 to 92
1st Grade: 92 to 133
2nd Grade: 133-179
3rd Grade: 179-224

Reflections/Advice: Evidence seems to show a better increase over time with using the strategies that we implemented this year. However, that being said, children at this age tend to “take off” with reading once they have enough strategies and word knowledge to decode. We also think the strategy of reading to someone daily making sure that the reading is accurate was important. Guided reading is also a key reading practice. We think that our work was valuable and it certainly seems to have helped our students focus on their reading. They were always keen to play the games and became very excited when their numbers of fluent sight words increased. However, all the strategies working together could have helped with the results we attained.

We think that overall, game and center based play with words is critical. Next year we will organize for daily work with sight word practice and phonetic word work, as well as writing the words. At least two 50 minute blocks are suggested and we agree that we need to organize our blocks better so that we can optimize the learning of our students that improves reading. We needed another few months of work to get these students to grade level reading as they are within range but not there yet.

We were surprised by how engaged the students became in their own progress. By the last month of school, they wanted to make their own games.