



2015-2016 AESN / NOII Case Study

School: Sea to Sky Learning Connections

District: #48 Sea to Sky

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Our focus for this year: To develop attached relationships with young at-risk students to maintain school connectedness.

Scanning: We posed the four key questions to the youth we were trying to engage with and got negative responses. They did not feel a sense of belonging or connectedness to the school community or have a sense of where they were going. The students did not attend school regularly and did not achieve academic success in previous years. They struggled with developing positive peer and staff relationship connections.

Focus: I wanted my students to become actively connected and engaged in the school community. I wanted them to feel they were valued and respected members of the school, with skills and knowledge to share and skills and knowledge to gain. I wanted to establish a culture of acceptance and belonging in a safe place.

Hunch: Previous school experiences had led to a common feeling of being marginalized – not being “successful at school” led to low self-efficacy as a learner. I suspected positive regard and empathetic listening could change social-emotional mindsets.

New professional learning:

- Becoming generational trauma (epigenetics) informed;
- Circle process

Taking action: We worked on promoting connectedness outside of the classroom. I deliberately and gleefully “rescued” students from a challenging academic course one afternoon each week for several months to go and participate in community activities. I challenged them to develop a new skill (how to play pool) as well as encouraged them to teach me new things (Airhouse and skateboard tricks). I was able to role model for class teachers’ ways to engage with the youth in non-traditional ways.

Checking: Every individual started in a similar place, but moved forward at a different rate. There are much stronger feelings of connectedness to school for most of the individuals, as demonstrated by significant attendance improvements and participation in school activities. Others demonstrated their connectedness by regular communication via social media.

Reflections/Advice: I learned: that paying attention to students as individuals without an academic achievement agenda allows for the development of connected relationships built on attachment; that the connection from an attached relationship can be developed and transferred to a school community; providing opportunities to authentically connect to staff and peers could change social-emotional mindsets.