



## 2015-2016 NOII Case Study

**School:** Brechin Elementary

**District:** #68 Nanaimo Ladysmith

**Inquiry Team Members:** Marissa Bradley and Jennifer Work

**Our focus for this year:** Our focus was fostering independence and providing choice in early literacy; and implementing a structure that motivated student interest and increased skills on assessment indicators in the spring.

**Scanning:** We continuously observed the students in literacy-based activities throughout the year, noting the level of focus and interest. The biggest contributing factor to student engagement included giving choice with regard to work areas and literacy activities. At the beginning of this process, we used our fall Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools (NLPS) screener, and have since compared the results to those of our spring NLPS assessment, finding a huge growth in high frequency word recognition as well as overall reading fluency.

After a few months into our inquiry process, we incorporated the questions “How are you doing?” and “Where to next?” during our whole-group check-ins (between independent work periods) as a way for our students to take ownership for their understanding of their learning. We found that posing these questions allowed them to focus on personal improvement and individual interests.

While all of the OECD and First Peoples Principles of Learning were encompassed in our scanning process, the social, reflective, and experiential nature of learning principles strongly resonated with us. We believe that our students’ success was largely due in part to conversations with peers about their learning (social), as well as having the opportunity to self-reflect (reflective and experiential).

**Focus:** We selected literacy choice (specifically the Daily 5) as our focus for our inquiry because we had witnessed its effectiveness in other classrooms. After attending the Daily 5 conference in the fall, we had hoped to bring choice and interest to our students in a literacy-based learning environment.

**Hunch:** In the past, we were inclined to use more whole-group teaching instead of mini-lessons followed by independent choice work time. Students weren’t often given the opportunity to work on their own choice within our whole-group structure. We have noticed that using the Daily 5 structure has increased the level of student engagement and their overall enjoyment of literacy activities.

**New professional learning:** We explored literacy choice (specifically the Daily 5). We were fortunate to attend the Daily 5 conference in November as well as a Joyful Literacy Mini-Summit in February. These experiences, along with the Daily 5, CAFE, and Joyful Literacy books, have been our greatest resources throughout this inquiry process.

We used some of our Professional Learning Community (PLC) time to share our inquiry focus and findings with our colleagues. Many of our school's primary staff were also incorporating similar literacy structures in their classrooms. This PLC time allowed all of us to share our successes and refine our teaching practices.

**Taking action:** The different strategies that we used to explore our inquiry question were:

- Individually teaching each Daily 5 strand to create a complete understanding of expected behaviours.
- Building stamina within each strand by slowly increasing the length of independent work time.
- Slowly introducing choice between two strands and increasing it up to four.
- Using mini-lessons throughout the week, teaching students literacy concepts to be incorporated into independent work time.
- Celebrating learning by allowing students to share achievements with their peers.

**Checking:** This process has been a huge learning experience for us. There is always room for continuous development, however we are excited by the increase in student interest during our literacy blocks. We have also seen an improvement in our students' NLPS screener data, which further validates the impact that our inquiry process has made on our students' learning. Our students are now able to set learning goals and evaluate their progress on previous academic abilities.

**Reflections/Advice:** We've learned that allowing children to make choices increases their interest and allows them to take ownership of their learning. We plan to incorporate the Daily 5 and other literacy structures in our teaching practice next year, continuously evaluating and reflecting on the success of our students within these structures.

Most importantly, we recommend that educators introduce choices slowly and ensure students are able to successfully demonstrate the expected behaviours before releasing them for independent work time. This will allow students to be successful in working autonomously, and determining their true interests and passions within their educational experiences.