



2015-2016 NOII Case Study

School: Cheslakees Elementary **District:** #85 Vancouver Island North

Inquiry Team Members: Jill Cook, Marilyn Randall

Contacts: jcook@sd85.bc.ca, mrandall@sd85.bc.ca

Our focus for this year: We explored ways to use guided discovery learning in the teaching of Early Literacy.

Scanning: Our curiosity was stimulated by the use of the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program and we wondered how to use some of the same methods in our teaching.

- We wondered if Kindergarten children could maintain their focus while a variety of teacher selected activities were going on in the room. We found it could. We got depth of learning because we had consistent parent volunteers/partnerships which assisted greatly in helping the children to maintain their focus.
- We wondered if Kindergarten children could choose activities that would foster their academic growth. We soon provided instructions to parents on asking questions to facilitate the learning. We used written prompts for our weekly nature walks.
- We developed ways to engage children in active, rather than passive, learning. After spring break we began to provide the students with “I can” statements to metacognitively provide purpose to their learning. We used common language
- We observed that engagement was growing as we addressed a variety of learning styles. After initial instruction in the use of materials which were specifically chosen to promote learning (e.g. Magnetic letters, several building materials) children used these materials through choice.

Focus: We have been using a stations approach in some subjects for some years and have found that the children enjoy it. We believe that learning is enjoyable and is its own reward. We wanted the children to have independence and curiosity in learning. We wanted them to understand and be able to tell us what they are learning and why. We also had concerns about students staying on task.

Hunch: Unengaged learners often begin to disrupt other. We undertook to adapt our teaching to provide a variety of opportunities for students to learn and practice their skills and expected that their skill, engagement, and ownership of learning would increase.

New professional learning:

- We worked throughout the year to build an understanding of STEM learning principles and its ties to play-based learning.
- We continued to develop a literacy program to respect and enhance students’ prior learning.
- We strongly integrated First Nations culture throughout the curriculum.

- Seven I-pads were purchased and used daily. The Raz Kids reading program was used regularly. After spring break the HeadSprouts phonics program was available on the classroom computers. Both programs are available to the students at home.
- There was daily communication with parents. We opened the day with shared reading or writing. We invited parent participation and many parents stayed daily. One day twelve adults were participating. We had a strong group of volunteers who assisted daily. There was nightly home reading of material selected by us for the entire school year.
- We used the new curriculum and checked frequently to see that we were tying activities in all settings to curriculum “Big Ideas” (indoors, outdoors, greenhouse, garden, beach, field trips, buddy class and transitions) to grade one in another school in the district.
- We held each other accountable in changing the way they questioned students. We worked on open ended questions that allowed a child to explain or show us, how they were learning the task at hand.

Taking action: Most of the strategies used are described above. Of particular success was our weekly whole school nature walks. On most occasions we chose an area of focus for the walk which tied in with the current focus (e.g. colours, uses of cedar, habitats, ocean organisms) and followed up with discussing and recording our findings.

Checking: During centers time, students were observed to be engaged as they learned through specifically provided tasks. We have a large number of pictures that capture this. The children capably and proudly shared their learning with adults. In May, literacy progress was assessed - 18 children:

- 72% could give the names and sounds of 20 or more letters
- 94% could give the names and sounds of 15 or more letters
- 89% of students read at PM Benchmark Level 1 or greater
- 67% of students read at PM Benchmark Level 2 or greater
- 16% of students read at PM Benchmark Level 3 or greater
- 11% of students read a PM Benchmark Level 6 or greater

One student experienced difficulty in learning the sounds (not the names) of letters because he requires speech assistance.

It is of interest that 28% of the class are of First Nations ancestry. All of these students read at PM Benchmark Level 1 or better.

All students have shown marked growth in printing, writing, copying, and drawing.

Reflections/Advice: This is the first year for our new teaching partnership. We would like to consolidate many of our practices and incorporate several earlier in the school year. As we become more familiar with the new curriculum, we will strive to tie more and more classroom activities to the big ideas. We will investigate the strategy of designing all free time activities to particular academic or social skills and of assessing those activities appropriately. We will also be developing new reporting methods.

This year has lead us to refine our question for next year; “How can we effectively work with students to communicate student learning?”