



2015-2016 NOII Case Study

School: Houston Secondary

District: #54 Bulkley Valley

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Our focus for this year:

- Our goal for the year was to work together so:
 - all students are able to learn academic content while participating in the same instructional routines and activities as the other students in the classroom,
 - all students are evaluated using assessment formats that are aligned with both academic content and Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals.
- To increase our confidence and our ability to support learners with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in our classrooms.
- To become more knowledgeable about Universal Designs for Learning (UDL) and the Learner Environment Instruction Curriculum (LEIC) planning tool so that the environmental, instructional, and curricular accommodations necessary for students with FASD are included in the classroom and curriculum designs from the initial planning stages.
- *Will a collaborative team approach and a concentrated professional development model, designed to build an understanding of the needs of learners with FASD and the Universal Design for Learning Framework, increase all students' involvement and learning in the general education classrooms?*

Scanning: Over the course of the 2014-2015 school year, we became increasingly concerned that several of our learners (some of whom are students diagnosed with FASD) for various reasons are not participating in the general education classroom with their peers. Some of these students are struggling to keep up with the pace of the secondary classroom and are feeling overwhelmed and anxious. Many of these students are also struggling to engage with their learning and seem to be “along for the ride” or are shutting down and becoming withdrawn. Inconsistent attendance and frequent late arrivals are becoming a greater concern. We also noticed that many of these students are struggling to connect with the adults as well as with their peers at the school. There is a great concern that the students we are thinking and talking about everyday are “hiding” or are starting to “fade away.” We fear that we are “losing these students.”

We started wondering if accommodations were made in classrooms to create a better fit for individuals with complex learning needs, would we see a ripple effect with all students?

In September 2015, we conducted a staff comfort survey and discovered that a majority of teachers would like to become more comfortable and confident designing unit and lesson plans for students with a wide variety of needs.

In October 2015, we conducted a student school-wide survey using the four key questions. We discovered that many of the students had an adult in the building who believed that they can be successful, felt that they had opportunities to teach others within the building and that their

talents were recognized by teachers and students within the school. However, the survey also showed that students felt that they could not use their learning styles and strengths to demonstrate their learning and we were surprised by the high number of students who felt that they were not valued. In February, we conducted 1-1 interviews with 18 students using questions that were an extension of our survey questions with the intent of giving more detail to the results of the survey.

Focus: There seemed to be a sense of frustration and exhaustion in the school last year. We felt frustrated because we were doing all the things that we knew should work and we were still not experiencing success with some of our students. We hoped that by learning how to consistently assess, plan for and teach these specific students, we would also improve the learning of all the students in the general classroom.

Hunch: We realized that we needed more tools, and more professional learning, and we noticed we were working in isolation and not spending enough time working collaboratively as a team to support students throughout the whole school. We also suspected that we needed to look at a common tool to assess and plan in a way that would help our students find success in the regular classroom.

New professional learning:

- In September 2015, the staff at HSS participated in a Provincial Outreach Program for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (POPFASD) Webinar. During this webinar, we learned about the current research on FAS and FASD as well as ways to create a better fit at school for learners with complex learning needs.
- Three of our staff members attended an 18 hour FASD training course.
- Two of our staff members completed a 6-week training course offered by POPFASD.
- Our staff is also working together in small collaborative teams of two or three to plan units using the UDL framework and to design learning activities so that the ‘floor is low and the ceiling is high’.
- All staff participated in online UDL workshops presented by SETBC.

Taking action: Our team took the following actions throughout the school year:

- All staff members entered into the study at one of three levels:
 - Level One -strategies for all staff (surveys, professional development opportunities and classroom observations).
 - Level Two - strategies and involvement for most staff (the same as ‘all’ staff, but willing to co-plan and co-teach in another teacher’s classroom, and participated in class reviews).
 - Level Three - strategies for some staff. The “some” staff were fully involved and willing to work with other teachers and staff, used the LEIC planning tool for at least one student and were willing to have observers and co-teachers in their classrooms.
- All staff participated in professional learning around FASD and UDL.
- Most staff worked in collaborative teams co-assessing, co-planning and co-teaching.
- Some staff used the LEIC planning tool to plan for specific students in their classes.
- Most staff took part in class review meetings with the intention of setting goals relating to this project.
- Most staff shared their co-planning and co-teaching with other teachers from the district who came to observe.
- Specific students took part in 1-1 interviews with a person from outside our school.

- All students did a student survey.
- All staff took part in a final debrief and end-of-year survey.

Checking:

- During 2015-2016, staff at HSS worked together on building our collective knowledge and understanding of current FASD research and Universal Designs for Learning. We noticed through the course of our study that many of the students (some of whom are diagnosed with FASD) are becoming more engaged in their learning and instead of talking about how these students seemed to be “along for the ride” or how they were “hiding” or starting to “fade away”, we are talking about how they are being successful.
- Specific vulnerable students indicated in 1-1 student interviews that they felt supported at school and in their classrooms.
- At HSS, we are beginning to see the benefits of the class review process, the use of the FASCETS Neurobiological Screening Tool and the use of LEIC planning tools to help classroom teachers find the right combination of environmental, curricular, and instructional adaptations to create a good fit for their learners. Most of the teachers took part in class reviews.
- Through our planning and collaborations, we noticed changes for our learners with FASD, but we also noticed changes for all the students in the participating classes. They spent more time in their general education classrooms actively engaged in meaningful learning experiences and were assessed in ways that helped evaluate and guide their progress.
- The final teacher surveys showed that most teachers gained a better understanding of UDL strategies and became more comfortable with environmental and academic planning for students who may have Fetal Alcohol Effects.
- Specific students selected for the study showed improved attendance as the school year progressed.

Reflections/Advice: At HSS, we are beginning to see the benefits of the class review process, and the use of LEIC planning tool to help classroom teachers find the right combination of environmental, curricular, and instructional adaptations to create a good fit for their learners. We are determined that we will find unique ways to continue our efforts to learn about students’ complex learning needs as well as Universal Design for Learning.

We learned the value of student and staff surveys and 1-1 student interviews to ensure that we know for sure where we are at, and where we need to go next.

We are concerned about the many students at one of our partner schools, Silverthorne Elementary that are diagnosed with FASD and the fact that there is not a deliberate connection between our schools’ staffs. We are concerned that without communication between our schools, learners and their families will continue to experience new struggles and challenges each year as they transition from one classroom environment to the next or from one school environment to the next.

We are aware that we are losing valuable learning time for our students during transition periods as they, their teachers and educational assistants work together each year to figure out what works for them. We would like to avoid the situation where new language and new tools are introduced when students are already having to transition between grades or between elementary and high school. We know that the transition period between grades or between elementary and secondary school is a challenge for many of our students because we often see

that the IEP goals students are working on in one year do not translate well to the next year or to new classroom settings.

Our vision is to create a continuum of support that involves consistent language and structures around instruction, assessment and inclusion for students and their families. We hope that cooperation and collaboration between the staffs at our two schools will create a situation where students' LEIC planning tools or environmental plans help each classroom teacher they work with to design environments where they can be successful, and where perhaps, our learners with complex learning needs will be encompassed in the planning and design of every classroom so we are no longer adapting after the design. We hope that all students will be included, from the beginning, in their classrooms.