



## 2015-2016 NOII Case Study

**School:** Pineridge Elementary

**District:** #52 Prince Rupert

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**Our focus for this year:** Early Literacy was our focus. In particular, we wanted to improve early literacy skills in our K/1 students, through connecting to personally relevant learning.

**Scanning:** We had concerns about many of our students not meeting expectations in reading by the end of grade one. We noticed that many of them were coming into Kindergarten as vulnerable learners. Some are making progress in certain areas of early literacy skills, but others continue to struggle. We questioned what we needed to change in our instruction that could make a positive difference in this result. We did not interview any students initially, but did at the end of the year. As our students are very young, 5-6 year olds, we adapted the questions accordingly:

- Who are the adults who can help you learn? (both in and out of school)
- What are you learning in your literacy groups?
- Why do you think you need to learn letters, sounds and words?
- What do you think you need to learn next?
- How can you do that?

Most students felt that their teacher, Educational Assistant and the Kindergarten Family Resource Worker, as well as their parents were the adults that helped them learn. Some students could answer these questions at a basic level i.e.: we are learning about letters and sounds; this will help us learn to read. The last two questions were fairly difficult for the children to answer, so perhaps we could think more about how to help young children think about how, why and what they are learning at school. During the literacy centers, children were happy and engaged with tasks at an appropriate level for them.

**Focus:** Our focus came as a result of a reading summit in Vancouver. In particular, we were wondering about using ongoing assessment to focus our instruction through play-based literacy learning centres. We wanted our students to love learning and be actively engaged in the learning process. Further, if we focused instruction on what students needed and had flexible groupings, would this help to improve their learning?

**Hunch:** We had a hunch that we were doing a lot of really 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 can really achieve. We were wondering how we could embed learning early literacy skills in a more fun, personally and culturally relevant way. Will this make a difference?

**New professional learning:** We explored strategies and assessment practices from resources such as: *Joyful Literacy Interventions*, *Early Learning Classroom Essentials* and *Catching Readers Before They Fall*. We met almost monthly with other NOII teams from three other elementary

schools to share our successes, concerns and questions. Ongoing assessment with flexible student groupings and targeted instruction was explored. We found the assessment piece was time-consuming, but gave good information to help focus instruction.

**Taking action:**

- Assessed students using circle charts.
- Grouped students according to similar needs.
- Gathered adult support: classroom teacher, English Language Development (ELD) teacher, Learning Improvement Fund (LIF) teacher, Aboriginal Kindergarten Family Resource Worker
- Researched, gathered and developed fun, play-based activities to work on the skills of learning letter names and sounds and sight words.
- Literacy block four times, 30 minutes weekly (two days with three adults, three days with four adults)
- Continued to assess and regroup

**Checking:** Students really enjoyed the literacy games. They were engaged and excited to play and learn. Nearly all students made good progress with their early literacy skills. It is exciting that 10 students are already reading and many are on their way. Twelve students can identify 10-20 sight words and only two do not know their letters and sounds.

Observations, discussions with students, as well as the circle chart assessments provided evidence for the changes we were noticing. Compared to last year's class, the students have made more progress in the development of early reading skills. Students are also showing a positive attitude towards reading, as demonstrated through their excitement about books.

**Reflections/Advice:**

- Next year, work more on connecting the skills to Aboriginal culture and content i.e. Aboriginal books, incorporate with place/nature
- Further develop learning centres on phonological awareness and writing
- Continue with three to four adults in the room supporting small group learning
- Continue using games that are adaptable for many skills
- Continue connecting with other schools working on similar inquiries
- Continue making learning fun!