



2015-2016 AESN TRANSITIONS CASE STUDY

School: Eke Me-Xi Learning Centre

District: #85 Vancouver Island North

Inquiry Team Members:

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Your focus for this year: Our focus area is to identify what are the widely held assumptions about our school and how are they contributing to students, families and staff sense of identity, belonging and academic success? We are focusing on transitioning our school’s identity from an “alternate” school, and the associated negative connotations, to being a choice school for indigenous learners and their families

Scanning: Our scanning phase consisted of creating a survey for students, staff and families that questioned them about our school and their ideas. Questions such as: why they decided to attend Eke Me-Xi, if they were to leave Eke Me-Xi what would they miss the most, are they engaged in demanding and challenging work, do they feel their teachers know their individual strengths and interests, do they feel their teachers know what they find difficult or challenging, do they see themselves reflected in the curriculum?

Focus: Staff was curious about how it is that grade 7 students from a number of elementary schools end up enrolling at Eke Me-Xi Learning Centre when we do not have a pre-transition program for future grade 8 students. We wanted to know what makes families and grade 7 students interested in applying to our school? We also were wondering why some of our current senior students have expressed an interest in transferring to the high school in town for their graduation year. This made us then wonder if others (students and families) do not see our school as a high school or do they just want the big walking the stage at the high school’s graduation event.

Hunch: We then wondered to what extent do we, as staff refer to the other schools in our area as high schools but do not refer to our own school as a high school. We wondered whether students and families internalized the notion that our school is on-reserve and therefore second best or inferior. We created three surveys to gather information from parents, staff and students.

Parent Survey Themes

Strengths	Possibilities
Identity - strong culture and language, traditional food preparing	Strengthen communication - Staff to Parents, Staff to Students
Location - proximity, safety and comfort	Graduation - is it comparable or the same as other high schools?
Support for students	Bring in past grads as role models
Communication - I know quickly about how or where my child is	

Not viewed as a public school
Staff continuously work after hours

Student Survey Themes

Strengths	Possibilities
Location	Course offerings - art/ drama/ weight room/ longer language classes
High expectations - "helps me grow and gain more confidence"	Trips to the Homelands
Support - assistance or extra help available one 2 one, pacing.	Weight room
Course offerings- language and culture, PE, catering	Graduation - some students said they would leave school because they had graduated but it was not clear if they meant here or elsewhere
Firm conviction of a good image	Half of our students identified the need for more self assessment practices and opportunities
Small class sizes, everyone knows each other, family of learners	

Staff Survey Themes

Strengths	Possibilities
Communication	Communication and connection with non-attenders
Image is good but the language used anecdotally says otherwise	Course offerings - continue to offer and highlight the unique courses that set us apart from other schools
Culture and language	Registration and enrolment process
Strong Staff cohesion and relationships with students	Staff collaboration and discussions around implementing First Peoples Principles of Learning and Aboriginal content in all courses (particularly Math and Science)

New professional learning: Strengthen our ability to incorporate Kwakwaka'wakw worldviews and perspectives in all curriculum-- we need to develop this further and plan collaboratively to learn from each other.

Taking action:

- Strengthen our ability to incorporate Kwakwaka'wakw worldviews and perspectives in all curricular areas.
- Integrate the experiences of being on the traditional territories into cross- curricular learning goals.
- Collaborate and co-construct in order to provide more opportunities for student self-assessment.
- Develop a more formalized grad plan for each student through their Student Learning Plans. Students identified the need for more self-assessment practices and opportunities—as a staff we noted that this is an area we need to learn more about and provide for further opportunities.

This is a three-year plan and we are developing more formalized grad plans and student learning plans this September (2016/17 school year). The areas of new professional learning will be developed collaboratively this school year as this is an ongoing inquiry.

Checking: Student surveys identified a need for more field studies to the Homelands and a weight room facility. As a result of this suggestion students and staff submitted an Athletic Trust fund request to the Nation with a budget for weight room equipment. This proposal required students to research adequate equipment and sources, budget for the materials and then have an adult band member take the proposal to a community meeting for voting. The weight room proposal was successfully approved by community members and the Trust committee - this demonstrated to students that submitting a proposal and being involved in a community process had positive results for themselves and their community members.

Reflections/Advice: An area that we realized we need to move forward with is increasing parental and community involvement in the processes of our school. We have celebrated successes through Open House events but we realize we need to have a more formalized parent-teacher event. Informing parents about the new curriculum changes, graduation programs, course selections and student progress will alter parental involvement and beliefs about our school.

We also realized those students and parents that are connected to our school have positive beliefs about our school and those not connected are most likely contributing to the negative ethos. An idea we are working on is the development of a promotional video about our school – student created—that can inform others about our school and be given to all elementary schools; that would be a great asset and potentially change belief systems.

