



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: École Central Elementary

School District: SD#60 Peace River North

Inquiry Team Members: Elaine McEachern (LAT), Betty Sowden (ASW), Brittany Walker (ASW), Nadia Francoeur (Reading Recovery)

Inquiry Team Contact Email: emceachern@prn.bc.ca

Type of inquiry: AESN

Grade levels: Primary (K - 3), Intermediate (4 - 7)

Curricular area(s): Language Arts - Literacy, Language Arts - Oral Language, Language Arts - Reading, Language Arts - Writing, Indigenous culture & celebrations

Focus area(s): Aboriginal understandings (for example, Traditional Knowledge, oral history, reconciliation), Community-based learning, Core competencies (for example, critical thinking, communication, problem solving), Differentiated instruction, Experiential learning, First Peoples Principles of Learning, Inclusion and inclusive instructional strategies, Indigenous pedagogy, Land, Nature or Place-based learning, Social and emotional learning

In one sentence, what was your focus for the year?

How will support for students be enhanced if those who work with our most needy share space & consequently, understandings of supports that work for our learners?

Scanning: Briefly summarize your scanning process. How did you use the four key questions as part of the scanning process? What did you notice about the experiences of your learners that were most important to your team?

We used the 4 key questions as a reflective piece. Students all identified 2-3 adults who believed they would be a success & all students identified at least one member of this team. I noticed that a wrap-around approach with our learners enabled us to offer support in a more holistic, community-minded way. Our students felt a sense of belonging, of connectedness, reciprocal relationships (1st peoples principles of learning). And I have to say, "us adults" noticed it too. This sharing of space brings people together more than just physically. We used the OECD principles of learning were honoured through the acts of 1.



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

Putting learners at the centre of our inquiry, 2. Emphasizing the social nature of learning (and teaching!), 3, Stretching all learners and 4. Building horizontal connections. Together, we learn. Together, we are better.

Focus: In a few sentences, explain why you selected this area. What changes were you hoping to obtain for your learners?

This inquiry came about as a result of school renovations, initially. We were struggling to find a place for all of our learning support people. Out of necessity, we 3 shared this one room, where we'd all be isolated into "silos" before. ASWs did their thing (but no one talked about it). LATs did their thing. RR teachers did their thing. We all serviced the same kids, but no one had any proactive conversations about the kids - we just met once or twice a year to talk about learning plans. By sharing space, by having natural conversations, by teaching and learning together, these kids felt like they were part of a "herd" and cared for. As well, we (the adults) felt more secure in the way we approached the instruction and support of our students - for they really became OUR students.

Hunch: Describe your hunches about the ways in which practices at the school may have been contributing to the experiences of your learners that were of concern to you.

Before we shared space, we rarely spoke to each other and we only collaborated on proactive measures for our kids in the fall. Adults weren't as invested in the kids or the job. Student struggles weren't discussed by all three stakeholders.

Now that we share space and teaching opportunities, we talk naturally, more often. I can't say everyone loves their job - we struggle with "stretch all learners" - because stress and overload can still diminish performance - but we're further ahead at this time of year than we were last year. Baby steps... With greater understanding of the 7 principles of learning comes better support for all learners... and we're still in the emergent stages of this.

New professional learning: What new areas of professional learning did you explore? What resources were most helpful? What specific designs did you use to support the learning of your colleagues?

Trauma informed teaching. Attachment theory. Indigenous food storage and preparation. The resources that were the most helpful were the conversations with "those in the know". As always, it's learning with and from our elders (Tanya Braun would die if she knew I called her an elder... she's probably younger than I am) but it's the learning from those masterful, well informed members of your community that helps you understand your people. When



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

you better understand your students and what they need, you stop trying to force square pegs into round holes.

Taking action: Describe strategies you and your team decided on and how your actions worked out.

Betty and I decided that as much as possible, we would go to classes together. She would shine an indigenous light on whatever it was we were doing. We didn't pull Nadia in as much as we should have, but it was her training year for Reading Recovery and I didn't want to overwhelm her by pulling her in too many different directions. Anyway, Betty and I would go into classes together, at least for a few lessons a month. In literacy, she'd bring books that celebrated culture to our young readers, while I focussed my efforts on guided, levelled reading. She pulled a group to her for oral stories or native story books. I did guided reading with the classroom teacher. In math, we taught the kids to make pemmican, dry meat, dried fruit, candied salmon. Betty (ASW), Classroom Teachers and I broke the kids into groups and taught them traditional techniques; the stories behind the food, and so on. In the whole school, we tried to talk about diversity - not one culture or the other. We just tried to be like elders with various strengths who wanted to share those strengths with the children.

Checking: Summarize the differences you made. Were they enough? Were you satisfied?

I'm not satisfied yet. None of us are! Betty was redeployed to another school, and we're currently trying to help our Brittany feel like part of the community. Nadia is working to understand Reading Recovery, so we haven't really had time to talk about Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. Next year = more steps together. More conversations about kids. More shared learnings and teachings.

Reflections/Advice: Finish by sharing what you learned from this inquiry, where you plan to go next, and what advice you would offer other schools with a similar interest.

I think we learned that we're all in this together - it's a process. There's no finish line. But if you think to yourselves, "Together - we're better" - then anything is possible. Positive Relationships are the cornerstones to a happy, effective school.