



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Alwin Holland

School District: SD#60 Peace River North

Inquiry Team Members: Angela Gatt, Crystal Dutchak, Cindy McGarroch, Deb Petuh, Leanne Montgomery, Kathy McDonald, Kelly Snow

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Type of inquiry: NOII

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

Curricular area(s): Applied Design, Skills & Technology, Arts Education, Career Education, Language Arts - Literacy, Language Arts - Oral Language, Language Arts - Reading, Language Arts - Writing, Social Studies

Focus area(s): Aboriginal understandings (for example, Traditional Knowledge, oral history, reconciliation), Core competencies (for example, critical thinking, communication, problem solving), Inclusion and inclusive instructional strategies, Social and emotional learning

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

Integrating diversity and inclusiveness into current practice to encourage an increased sense of positive, personal and cultural identity, build stronger relationships, and value diversity.

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?

This inquiry came from a noticing of student interactions, social responsibility assessments, and the revised British Columbia curriculum. We observed that few students had the ability to accurately list their own strengths and weaknesses. This was concerning, especially with the focus on student self assessment in the new curriculum. We were curious if students had a strong understanding of their personal identity and were unable to articulate this, or if this was an area they were lacking understanding in. As a greater number of students move to Fort St. John from other areas we are seeing a need to be more culturally



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responsive in our teaching. In September 2016, we surveyed 101 students ranging from grades 3 - 5. We asked 13 questions in relation to their sense of belonging, identity and engagement at school.

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

From the survey results we recognized three key areas of focus: students recognizing that all classmates are included, a sense of personal belonging, and a strong understanding of student background culture and identity. We plan to focus on creating self assessments that connect to the "Valuing Diversity", "Building Relationships", and "Relationships and Cultural Contexts" facets of the Core Competencies. We also intend to develop and team teach lessons with a focus on culture and belonging.

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.

In the past, we focused lessons strongly on community building at the start of the year, but this lessened as the year went on. We think that this needs to continue throughout the year to continue fostering a sense of identity and belonging.

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?

Some of the team read articles online about inclusive, culturally responsive teaching. A colleague from Aboriginal Education taught us about the medicine wheel and the 7 teachings. Team teaching, collaborating and sharing resources among team members was most helpful to us. The team teaching and collaboration time was also helpful to supporting the learning of colleagues.

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

- 1) Outdoor Assembly - Welcome to Alwin Holland
 - Outdoor assembly held in the first week of school
 - Members of our school and FSJ community delivered messages of welcome and belonging
 - Included Aboriginal prayers and dancers



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- Entire school was treated to bannock afterward
- 2) Winter Traditions Projects
 - Two classes investigated and researched their winter traditions to gain a deeper understanding of their personal culture
 - Students had choice in their method of presentation
- 3) Personal Identity Masks
 - Two classes casted their faces to create masks that they they decorated with items that symbolized their unique identities
 - They wrote to justify their choices
- 4) Team Teaching Lessons
 - The six teachers on the team broke apart into 3 team teaching groups. First, we collaborated to plan lessons. We taught the lessons shortly after. They lasted about an hour and a half. One group created 'all about me' bags to share with classmates. Another group created black out poetry. The third group worked to consider perspectives of others.

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

We surveyed students at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year with the same survey (only slight modifications were made to questions to ensure a more clear answer, and one question was added to the end survey). We were very satisfied with the results. They showed that students were more accurately able to state their background culture, their sense of enjoyment at school increased, and they feel more liked by other students and had a greater sense of inclusion. The answers to the four questions were much richer, and the majority of the students were able to add justification to their answers at year end.

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.

When we surveyed students again at the next of the year we added a new question about clubs students would like to see at our school. There were several interesting answers, and will be integrating some of them into the school next year through intramurals for all age groups. In addition, student results for sense of safety at school remained approximately the same as they did at the beginning of the year. We would like to see an increase in these numbers next year and are thinking about efforts to make this so. Our advice would be to start small, look for the specific needs of your school, and use your strengths. To involve parents, we would recommend sending home a rationale explaining the intent of the collaboration.



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