



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Charles Hays Secondary School

School District: SD#52 Prince Rupert

Inquiry Team Members: Lonni Bryant, Aja Lihou, Roberta Edzerza, James Zlatanov, Sandy Pond, Sandy Beckwith, Kathy Offutt, Cindy Mah and Sonny Henry

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Type of inquiry: AESN Transitions

Grade levels: Secondary (8 - 12)

Curricular area(s): Not applicable

Focus area(s): Aboriginal understandings (for example, Traditional Knowledge, oral history, reconciliation), Community-based learning, First Peoples Principles of Learning, Inclusion and inclusive instructional strategies, Transitions

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

Our focus this year centred around grade eight students transitioning from a middle school setting to the secondary school.

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?

Our team adapted the four key questions to best fit our local context. Teachers at Charles Hays Secondary administered the questions to most classes with the intent to answer the questions: "What brings you to school?...What keeps you here?" From the data we gathered, we were able to conclude that our grade 9 students require the most support to feel a strong sense of belonging at Charles Hays Secondary.



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

We selected our area of focus because although our impact study encompasses all grade to grade transitions at the secondary school level, we identified the transition from grade 8 to 9 as our top priority for this year.

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.

Our hunch focused around the First People's Principles of learning, the goals of the Aboriginal Education Council/SD52 partnership agreement and acknowledging student voice. The First People's Principle that drove our hunch was "Learning involves intergenerational roles and responsibilities." We believed that having our older students, teachers and community members as the ones who help our grade 9 students develop a sense of belonging in our school would have impactful results. In addition, our hunch was focused on developing students understanding and connection to the local culture of the Ts'msyen people, which is also the culture of more than half of our district's students as well as a central goal to the Aboriginal Education Council/SD 52 partnership. Lastly, our hunch was built from gathering and acknowledging student voice to understand their needs and perspectives that connects them to our school.

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?

Our team's professional learning was focused on developing an understanding of local protocol around traditional welcoming ceremonies. We used people resources, such as local Aboriginal Elders and Knowledge Holders, to broaden our understanding. Our Elders and knowledge holders were part of the planning to our action steps that were built out of our hunches. We also continue to build our knowledge of and practice in the Spirals of Inquiry.



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

Our action step was a Transitions (Learning) Feast. The Feast involved grade 11 students and staff from Charles Hays Secondary welcoming grade 8 students from both our local middle school and private Catholic school to Charles Hays Secondary. We followed local feasting protocol developed with a Ts'msyen Elder. The Feast included a celebration of the Ts'msyen culture that featured dancing and drumming performed by students from both Charles Hays Secondary and the local middle school. The Charles Hays students prepared and served soup to every grade 8 student at the Feast. They also made gifts, a cedar rose or bracelet, with the help of one of our Aboriginal Role Models. The cedar rose/bracelet featured a message from the older students that will help the younger students have a successful transition.

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

As of the time of writing this summary, we have only conducted some initial checking by asking and gauging the reactions to the Feast. All reports thus far have been overwhelmingly positive. Students and staff believe the Feast made our younger students feel honoured to have been part of the Feast. More checking by utilizing the 4 questions will be conducted at the start of next year.

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.

This year we have learned that our students' voices are important when making decision for whole school initiatives that are meant to aid grade-to-grade transitions. Our next steps are to gather more insight to how events emphasizing the importance of local culture and language, like our Transitions (Learning) Feast, influence the academic success and sense of belonging at the secondary school.