



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Departure Bay ECO School

School District: SD#68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith

Inquiry Team Members: Lisa Frey, Christine Creighton, Tanya Cairns, Ruth Irving, Margie Radigan,
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Type of inquiry: NOII

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

Curricular area(s): Cross-curricular

Focus area(s): Core competencies (for example, critical thinking, communication, problem solving), Successful Learner Traits

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

How can we use metacognitive strategies (Successful Learner Traits) within our instruction so that students are reflecting on their progress AS they are involved in their learning?

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 noticed that our students were generally passive learners. They were not able to demonstrate their understanding of what it takes to be successful learners. They lacked the language to describe themselves as learners, talk about their successes, or indicate what their next steps in learning were. This meant that our students were not only unable to reflect on their own learning, but also unable to set the goals for improvement. It was also important because current educational research shows that meta-cognition, self-evaluation, along with feedback, have a positive impact on student learning.

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



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We decided to focus on the process of learning by implicitly teaching the 8 Successful Learner Traits to students in grades K through 7. Students would be given every opportunity to practice these traits, reflect on their learning using the traits, and plan for their next steps in learning by employing the traits.

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.

We initially looked at our past reporting practices as needing to change. Staff felt that our previous report cards did not match the new curriculum language. Our hunch was that the Successful Learner Traits (SLTs) were a structured to help us to align the new B.C. curriculum with current reporting criteria to include “student voice” and for students to report on the core competencies. We realized that school-wide consistency in language to talk about learning and progress would be key. We needed to ensure that all stakeholders – students, staff, and parents - had a clear vision of what a successful learner is.

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?

Sue Bannister, creator of the SLT program and teacher in SD#71, did a workshop with our staff about the program at the end of the 2016 school year. We became familiar with and piloted the Successful Learner Traits in the entire school beginning in September. We began to build common language using the eight support posters displayed in all classrooms and in the main hallway of the school. We were able to send three of our new staff members to a Pro-D workshop with Sue Bannister at Pleasant Valley Elementary (SD#68) in February. These teachers shared their learning with the rest of the staff. Additionally, a four teacher team from Departure Bay and Pleasant Valley spent a day at Arden Elementary in Courtney with Sue Bannister. We had an opportunity to observe two classrooms using the SLT program and to debrief with Sue following the observations. This learning was then shared as a workshop with the rest of the Departure Bay Staff and our VIU practicum students. Regular staff sharing of ideas and successes with the SLTs has been a key component of this inquiry!

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



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

- Successful Learner Traits wall posters and small cards were ordered for each classroom and the hallway
- Staff began the school year by teaching the first three traits: Compassionate, Industrious, and Strategic using literature and classroom activities
- The remaining five traits were introduced at the pace and comfort level of the classroom teacher: Creative, Thoughtful, Risk-Taking, Enthusiastic, and Confident
- SLT slips were used school-wide as a tool for positive reinforcement (PBIS), recognition and weekly draws
- One SLT was highlighted each month through classroom activities and monthly assembly
- Classroom teachers regular sharing of ideas and successes using the SLTs in a wide variety of ways: self-evaluation, goal-setting, self-regulation, literary character analysis, positive recognition slips, teacher feedback, student voice in on-going communication of student learning (written and e-portfolio) and linking to the core competencies
- Using the targets "I Can"... for learning intentions and "I Am..." for SL traits needed to meet the intention as a way to improve instructional practice and student engagement in learning

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

This process has been a huge learning experience for staff and students. We used anecdotal evidence to track student improvement over the course of the inquiry this past school year. Students were able to use the SLTs with support in January. Through continued practice and instruction, the students have become more independent at describing their own learning using the SLT language with supporting evidence or examples. We used the "Big Three" questions from the Spirals of Inquiry to interview seven students across grade levels to see how they were able to use the Successful Learner Traits to talk about their learning.

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.

- Students got better at being able to talk about their learning in a meaningful way with more time and practice using the language of the SLTs
- Students developed their ability to recognize and prioritize the traits that they would need to use to in their next steps of learning
- Improved student enthusiasm and ownership of learning



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation **Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network**

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

- Students across the school were routinely using SLT language in age-appropriate ways
- Primary students really related to the animal symbol of the trait
- Parents were receptive to the SLTs in on-going communication of student learning
- Staff got more confident and thoughtful at using the SLTs to engage students in their own learning and in self-reflection through modeling and sharing
- Staff became more strategic and creative in using the SLTs for student feedback and for reporting
- We started to link with Pleasant Valley to share our learning journeys in February and want to continue this connection
- We would like to create a staff library of picture books to support teaching the 8 Successful Learner Traits using the book list from SD#71 as a guideline
- We would like to organize a Parent Information Meeting to show the direct link between Successful Learner Traits and the Core Competencies at the start of the school year
- We plan to invite Sue Bannister back to do a follow-up presentation early in the school year