



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Gudangaay Tlaats'gaa Naay Secondary School

School District: SD#50 Haida Gwaii

Inquiry Team Members: Derek Seifert, Christine Cunningham, Bernadette Marie

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Type of inquiry: AESN Transitions

Grade levels: Secondary (8 - 12)

Curricular area(s): Not applicable

Focus area(s): Community-based learning, Experiential learning, Flexible learning, Indigenous pedagogy, Land, Nature or Place-based learning, Social and emotional learning, Transitions

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

Giving credit for learning that hasn't always been credited - transitioning to self-directed 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 used the four questions to interview students who volunteered to be part of this stage of the inquiry. Two students from grades 9, 11, and 12, and 4 students from grade 8 were interviewed. The questions were a place to start, but students take their responses to where they want to go with the conversation. What became clear with all students was that they felt supported in the school, that they knew they could succeed (whether they were or not), but also that this part of their educational journey is something that is done to them, rather than something that they are doing for themselves. There was a sense that high



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school is something they have to do to get on with the real life/learning that comes later when they get to make choices.

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

We were hoping that students would take ownership of their learning, that they would realize that we do offer a range of possibilities, that we aren't just looking for one kind of student in our school, but that we value individuals and individual pathways.

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.

Despite the efforts of teachers to make changes and accommodate student needs and diversify learning opportunities, we still see a tendency for accredited work to be done during school hours, with school staff, with peers, etc. Assessment of outside of the box learning is trickier than grading a set of papers written by the whole class, until you develop a system to do so.

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?

We wanted to develop a system that allows students to apply for class credit for opportunities that fall outside of classes, and sometimes outside of school. In some cases we have very bright students who are doing great work in the community, but are struggling to make it in their classes. Our focus was on assessing learning for learning activities that are not always connected to class, or even to school. The most helpful resource was collegial discussion and debate, and while the form we created to facilitate crediting a wide range of learning experiences was not successful with student use, it did result in discussion, thought, and effort amongst staff to try to address each students strengths, needs, and accomplishments in and outside of school.



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

We created a Request for Credit form to allow students to apply for credit for learning outside of class. While students did feel that they had no choice in what kind of learning they do in school, they didn't embrace the idea of applying for credit for learning outside of class or school. The form required curricular connections to be made in order for credit to be given, this might mean an oral or written report about the experience, a film documenting their trip, or any number of possibilities, but that extra piece where they were required to demonstrate learning seemed to be a roadblock. In the second semester a Project Based Learning course was introduced to grade 8 students to foster self-directed learning.

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

Satisfied? Does that happen? Did we make any differences? Sure. The staff know that we have some extraordinary students who are doing great things outside of the classroom. The students know that we respect the things they do outside of the classroom, and for many the skills they have are showcased in the school, cooking lunch for the school, planting vegetables that feed the school, digging and cleaning clams, working in the trades program and finding that their abilities can be recognized in school, but we still struggle in getting the same kind of enthusiasms and success in academic courses.

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 transition to self-directed learning is going to be tricky, we know that some students will take to it with ease, but for others their strengths will still be difficult to showcase, particularly in academic areas.

Advice to other schools: Take time to know your students, recognize their abilities and support their interests. Keep doing inquiry work because it is worth doing.