



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Howard DeBeck Elementary

School District: SD#38 Richmond

Inquiry Team Members: Josie Zahn, Sarah McAlister

Inquiry Team Contact Email: zahnjosie@gmail.com

Type of inquiry: AESN

Grade levels: Primary (K - 3)

Curricular area(s): Language Arts - Literacy, Language Arts - Oral Language, Language Arts - Reading, Language Arts - Writing, Science, Social Studies

Focus area(s): Core competencies (for example, critical thinking, communication, problem solving), Differentiated instruction, First Peoples Principles of Learning, Flexible learning, Inclusion and inclusive instructional strategies

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

We looked at early literacy, collaboration between teachers, and transforming our learning environment.

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 set out to give children opportunities to engage in early literacy activities and with various materials. This year, teaching a Kindergarten and Grade One class, Josie is finding that she has a more diverse range of learners than in the past with teaching only one grade. She also has a student of Aboriginal descent. Sarah is supporting children from K-7 in terms of their English language acquisition. We have noticed diverse learning profiles amongst all the students. We are curious about how we can integrate the First People's principles of learning with hands on materials to enhance the students' concept of storytelling. We wonder how we can engage all learners in early literacy, using the First People's principles of learning, in a way that encourages success and challenge at all levels of development. We noticed that our school is in need of more learning materials



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conducive to exploring storytelling in different ways, as well as building our Indigenous resources such as books.

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

Josie and Sarah worked collaboratively through a district project on Playful Storytelling and discussed how to use this information and the ideas in our school with our diverse student population. Our school has a Modular Learning Center that is set up with literacy centers and we thought that this could be an excellent opportunity to share our learning about storytelling with a wider range of teachers and students, through collaborative teaching and planning, as well as the introduction of loose parts and Indigenous stories for story telling.

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 staff dynamics are changing and there is an openness among staff to plan, teach and learn collaboratively. With our new curriculum, we are looking at ways to change our teaching styles and learning environment in order to create the best learning opportunities for all students. We are still in a transitional period and we feel there is a lot of learning that needs to happen and we have a lot of potential for establishing collaboration and flexible learning environments in our school learning community.

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?

Josie and Sarah were involved in a district group focused on Playful Storytelling through First Peoples Principles of Learning, with Marie Thom and Janice Novakowski. During this time we hoped to observe other teachers currently using some of these storytelling techniques and materials as well as having Marie Thom as a mentor. We will participate in meetings with teachers across the district over the course of the year and would like to share ideas with our own staff. We are also involved in using social media, particularly using twitter to follow other participants in our storytelling group and teachers in other districts.

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



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worked out.

We first attempted to set up a story telling station in the MLC to use during our literacy centers, with 2 classes (k/1, and grade 1). What we found was that it was challenging to hear the children telling their stories and there was often too much happening in the room for the children to become fully engaged in the storytelling process. We adapted the activity to introduce the ideas to 2 classes at the same time, as a whole group. Then, we would break into smaller groups for the children to show their learning in different ways. All 3 teachers (k/1, 1, and ELL) were able to work together and engage with students in both classes and at varying levels. This also gave us more freedom to record children's stories, go outside or into the hallway. We had flexibility to use alternate learning environments because there were three teachers with the group.

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

We noticed that the children in both classes could retell the stories we shared and make up their own stories more confidently over time: individually, in pairs or as a small group. The children had opportunities to choose how they would share their stories, through building with loose parts, drawing, or oral story telling. Most of the children were very eager to share their stories and the teachers were able to document their stories through photos or recording on the ipad. All children were engaged in the activity, including children with special needs since we provided varied ways of responding to the content. It was very apparent that the children were very engaged during the last few lessons when we noticed a "hum" in the room and quiet during our learning circle. This was quite a contrast to the start of our year, when the children needed much more support to attend to the task and stay on task throughout our time together.

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.

It was wonderful to collaborate with other teachers. Planning to meet together with all teachers involved would be beneficial, particularly at the beginning of the year. We were fortunate to have a large space to use in our MLC as well as all our classrooms and using space outdoors. Without these spaces it would have been more challenging to work with 2 full classes at the same time. Our advice would be to jump into an inquiry and try it out, as much of our learning took place by going through the process. For example, we started with the idea of a center approach and ended up with a whole group approach that worked better for our purposes.