



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Nakusp Elementary School

School District: SD#10 Arrow Lakes

Inquiry Team Members: Keith Greenhalf, Joseph Baron Lorna Newman

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Type of inquiry: NOII

Grade levels: Primary (K - 3)

Curricular area(s): All curricular areas

Focus area(s): Core competencies (for example, critical thinking, communication, problem solving), Growth mindset, Self-regulation, Social and emotional learning

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

My focus this year was on growth mindset vs fixed mindset

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?

Started to scan as soon at the beginning of the year. What were their strengths as a group. They seemed to be a cohesive group with strong social/emotional skills, but many of them exhibited anxious behaviours and some would exhibit a fixed mindset and I wondered why at such a young age when curiosity and exploring comes so naturally at this age that some students were not willing to take the risks or didn't see themselves as being lifelong learners although when asked, many of them said "I won't give up...like Terry Fox". I observed that some learners were able to manage their own emotions and exhibit a growth mindset, but not always and not for all students. I noticed that at this age, students are exploring their own identity and are not very patient and being aware of the First Peoples Principles of Learning, I was aware that this seemed to be a developmental need that I needed to be aware of to cultivate that in the students.



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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?

I was hoping to obtain for my learners the ability of them to recognize their emotions and how their emotions and how they "talk" to themselves when they struggle with a task or with learning, how it either stops their learning or will encourage them to try again. I wanted to cultivate a growth mindset for all my students.

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 are very aware that many students in our school struggle with self-regulation, stress, and have weak social-emotional skills. We are not sure why, but not all students could identify an adult in the school that believes in them. We are trying to change that culture but we are also in an area in the province where many of our students are at risk since it is an isolated area with very little after school programs to engage students and help them develop their self-worth etc. We are also aware that how we engage with the students effects how they perceive us as the adults in their school life. As a school team, the staff often wonders if mindset plays a larger role in how students learn rather than just socio-economic factors. I personally think that the language I use when speaking in my classroom plays a very large role in how students see themselves as learners and how important descriptive feedback is too. With all this wrapped up in the CORE competencies and students developing the skills to self assess.

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?

My new professional learning took a turn. I finished reading Joe Boaler's "What's Math Got to Do With it" along with reading about mindset by Mary Cay Ricci called, "Mindsets in the Classroom". I glanced over Peter Johnston's "Choice Words" and was reminded of his messages, but I really started looking into and using/reading "The Zones of Regulation" by Leah M. Kuypers, MA Ed. OTR/L loaned to me by our Learning Resource Teacher, Keith Greenhalf. This was the vehicle to support the learning of myself and my colleagues.

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



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As soon as possible, I started explicitly teaching/modeling a variety of emotions (as laid out in the the book). This took lots of time, practice and games (e.g. students had to guess each other's emotions by looking at their facial cues, body cues and voice cues (see lesson 7). Students were then introduced to the different zones. Blue Zone is when you are down in the dumps, downhearted, etc. feeling tired or sad. Green Zone is the optimal zone for learning. You feel happy, content, confident. The Yellow Zone, is the zone I wanted students to become aware of. It is when they are wound up, or have butterflies in their stomach, or very fidgety. They may be feeling, nervous, anxious, overwhelmed, etc. In the Red Zone, I wanted to students to learn how to avoid this zone altogether. That is when they lose their cool or too excited and ready to come apart at the seams. They may feel furious or ecstatic. Note: students were told that these zones are to help them, not to make them think that they are "bad" for being in the Red or Yellow Zone. I did not focus too much on the Blue Zone because I don't often find this zone a difficulty for kindergarten students. After they were introduced to the zones, students were then taught/discussed what emotion would belong in what zone. This also took much time, I did not want to rush this process due to the conversations and discussions around what they thought which feeling belonged in which zone. Through this whole process we would also be referencing mindset and what their brain could be thinking while their feelings were being "felt". Students began to realize that some feelings and thoughts inhibited them from moving from the Yellow Zone back to the green zone. Students were then taught different tools to calm their feelings/mind/body so they could move themselves back (with teacher guidance) into the green zone and become more focused on their growth mindset. We focused a lot of many breathing techniques and we would often practice breathing when already calm and focused and in the green zone. We have the Zones chart posted in our rooms and constantly discuss them if situations arise. Reflection on the CORE competencies around Personal Awareness and Responsibility continues to be a focus throughout the whole year.

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

This is where we (I) am not sure if important differences were made? After talking this over with my colleagues and discussing my observations, I think it made a difference because the students have the language and are more aware of their feelings and how it effects their minds and mindset. Even though they may not be able to regulate their emotions appropriately when in the moment without teacher guidance, all the students can achieve and feel proud of their accomplishments and be more willing to take risks and begin to see themselves as lifelong learners. They know that it is okay to feel and to trust their feelings and they have learned to skills that they may be able to recall in order to be aware of how their mind is thinking while they are learning something difficult or new. I believe their



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willingness to do this is due to the culture/language of "I can learn how and to not give up" attitude in our classroom and the willingness for the students to help each other out. They are very young children who mostly co-regulate, but can certainly talk about emotions and the Zones in ways that show they understand how emotions and mindset play a role in how they learn and feel.

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.

I learned from this inquiry that this focus will always be first and foremost as I continue my teaching career. I knew I was doing some things well, but this made it more tangible. Where I plan to go next depends on the student's needs. This is now June and we will continue the course, but next year's student's needs may be more and I will have to adjust accordingly. I would offer any other schools to purchase The Zones of Regulation if they don't have a copy and to make it a focus and common language among the students and staff.