



## Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

### 2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

**School Name:** North Oyster Elementary

**School District:** SD#68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith

**Inquiry Team Members:** Jennifer Robinson, Jacqueline Dunn, Marylee Holmes, Belinda Harrison, Camille Paradis, Cheryl Lowrence, Amelia Beiling, Helen Fall, Katie Loos

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**Type of inquiry:** NOII

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

**Curricular area(s):** Language Arts - Reading

**Focus area(s):** Differentiated instruction, Inclusion and inclusive instructional strategies

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

Our focus this year, was on providing choices for reading 'good fit books' during Read to Self to determine if greater autonomy would allow students to increase their engagement with text and to improve their decoding and comprehension skills.

**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?

At the start of the year, teachers sought to get to know their students and their reading habits and preferences through conversations and observations as well as a reading survey. One of the main findings was that students were more enthusiastic about reading when they could choose the books.

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

We chose this area of inquiry because the district developed literacy assessment showed that many students needed support for specific phonological skills as well as comprehension skills. We also administered a reading survey to gauge the attitudes of



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students toward reading. The survey showed that students wanted choice in their reading materials, but it also showed that many students did not enjoy reading at school. This led to wondering if we could explicitly frame reading at school so that students were aware of, and apply criteria for 'good fit' books to increase student engagement allow them to better demonstrate their reading skills.

**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.

Some of the practices we identified that may be contributing to a need for a change at school were: not giving equal importance to different kinds of texts (graphic novels, picture books, informational books, novels, e-books, digital sources of information etc.); not highlighting the many kinds of texts available, and focusing on reading level rather than other factors such as interest, background knowledge, and comprehension that also determine if a book is a good fit for a student.

**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?

This year staff spent a great deal of time understanding and applying the new curriculum in their classrooms. One of the common Big Ideas that is common for classes from Kindergarten to Grade 7 is the "joy and creativity of story and text". As a staff we spent time working on ways to refine our practice and explicitly teaching the criteria for a 'good fit' book, characteristics of independent reading, highlighting many different kinds of books to spark curiosity among students, and working with students so that they were better able to reflect on their reading practices. As a staff we utilized ideas from the books Daily 5 and CAFE.

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

While classes had independent reading time in their classes we also tried to promote the joy of story and text in other ways. Over the course of the year, we implemented many school wide initiatives to promote engagement with stories and text.

Our school focused on independent daily reading throughout the year. Classes worked on stamina. One early primary class began with reading quietly for 4 minutes but have



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progressed to 14 minutes. Older classes have increased stamina for 20-30 minutes. We also worked on choice. Students were taught about 'good fit books' and teachers ensured that there were lots of books to choose from in the classroom. Teachers also worked to ensure that there were comfortable places to read such as: beanbag chairs, sofas, and big chairs. One class had a binder of 'book recommendations' to help peers choose books as well as having book talks by students about books they enjoyed.

Inspired by a blog by Adrienne Gear about a school-wide Most Magnificent Thing project, North Oyster undertook the project at our own school during the month of December.

The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires is a story about the perseverance and growth mindset the character, and her assistant (her dog), shows as they build the most magnificent thing. It is an entertaining story and students very much enjoyed the creative story and illustration details in the book.

Besides being a fun story, North Oyster used it as a springboard for building individual magnificent things and reflecting on the core competencies.

Once the story was read, students were given the challenge of building their own 'most magnificent thing'. The students demonstrated a great deal of creative and critical thinking during the course of this project. They often had to adjust their design while they made their creation as not every project was smooth from start to finish, but the enthusiasm and growth mindset during the project was unmistakable.

During the month of February 2017 our school had many literacy activity with the theme Reading is a Family Affair. Below is a list of the activities students participated in.

Read-A-Thon (January 18-Feb 1): This year, over 170 of our students read 20 minutes a day for 14 days! In addition, they shared pictures of their families reading together.

2nd Annual Great North Oyster Book Swap (January 30-Feb 3): Students could bring books from home to 'swap' for different books. It created a lot of curiosity and excitement about books.

Who Am I? : Students were asked to guess a famous book character based upon clues from the morning announcements.

Guess Who? (Bulletin Board Guessing Game): AT the bulletin board in front of the library



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student had the opportunity to identify 10 book characters by their silhouettes.

D.E.A.R (Drop Everything and Read): All classes “buddied up” for a whole school reading session.

PJ Day and celebration assembly: On Friday, February 3rd there was acknowledgement of all students who participated in our read-a-thon.

North Oyster Elementary was fortunate to have Celestine Aleck visit our school in May and told stories to our students. Before she came to our school, our school librarian read stories by Celestine Aleck to our students.

On the day of her visit, students were divided into groups: Kindergarten – Grade 2; Grade 3-5, and Grades 6-7. For close to an hour, she held students attention as she told traditional stories as well as stories that she had created. Students talked a great deal about the experience. Parents have said that their children re-told the stories with enthusiasm at home. This was another way for students to find enjoyment in stories.

For the months of May and June, students participated in a school wide project that focused on aboriginal understandings. As part of this project, we were fortunate to have Willard Gallick visit our school weekly. He is a talented story teller and an honoured elder living within the Snuneymuxw First Nation. Willard visited each classroom in the school 5 times and talking to students about:

- Respect for the environment
- The importance of cedar
- Telling stories that will help students identify animal characteristics

As part of this project, students sanded a cedar paddle and created an animal design in the Coast Salish style. This has generated a great deal of interest and engagement with students for the storytelling and the literature being read as well as creating the paddles.

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

School practices made a difference this year. With a lot of choice and exposure to many different texts and stories, students showed more engagement by being able to increase their stamina for reading during Read to Self times. By engaging a wide variety of reading activities, students were more aware that the many creative ways books can be used as a springboard for their own ideas. Many of the stories told and books read have become new



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favourites and students have shown more interest in many different books. In some cases, it also sparked writing ideas and responses to literature.

**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.

Based on the success of these interactive activities that used stories and texts as springboards, we plan to continue to explore stories and texts in fun and creative ways.