



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Pleasant Valley Elementary

School District: SD#68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith

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Type of inquiry: NOII

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

Curricular area(s): Career Education, Student Self-Assessment

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

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

Student self-assessment and identification of learner traits that help them to be successful



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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?

With the new reporting order and the direction in our district, staff have been focusing more on talking to students about their learning and adding student voice to evidences of learning for communicating with families. If asked two of the four key questions, 'how are you doing?' and 'where to next', there were many students who could not comment specifically about their learning and describe or define why they thought they had done a 'good job' or a 'not very good job' along with what skills they used to help them complete the 'job'. They could only comment on a superficial level about how it is going with their learning and what their next steps were.

It was important for our staff to work towards learners being at the centre and actively engaged in understanding their strengths to draw upon as well as areas to develop in order to support their learning. We wanted to help students realize their individual differences and develop an understanding of themselves that builds connections across subject areas and in their lives in general. The Successful Learner Traits are applicable across academic content areas and in social-emotional areas along with all areas of the core competencies as well.

Our scanning included three of the First Peoples Principles of Learning. We specifically focused on:

- Learning supports the well-being of oneself. Recognizing the successful learner traits they had and ones they could develop further would help students develop a deeper understanding of themselves.
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions. Students could reflect on the results of using or not using a particular successful learner trait in different academic and social-emotional learning situations.
- Learning involves patience and time. Part of this patience and time is practice, acknowledging mistakes as learning opportunities and continually moving forward. Knowing our learning strengths can help us with this.

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

During staff PLC time, we worked as a whole staff and in primary and intermediate groups discussing different ways to incorporate student voice and discussed the need to teach some concepts directly versus assuming the students understood what they meant. Students didn't have some of the language or skills we anticipated or that they needed in



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order to think more deeply about their learning, why they were performing the way they were, and how they could improve. We were hoping with direct teaching of, practicing of, and reflecting on successful learner traits, students would gain an explicit understanding of what leads to success. They could reflect and learn what it is that they are doing that helps them be successful in their learning and what other areas they could work on to encourage further success.

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 talked about different ways teachers had tried to encourage student self-assessment or student voice in the past including using rubrics, 'ticket out the door' systems, thumbs up and down, stop lights, and 'two stars and a wish' type of follow ups. We realized we made assumptions about student knowledge and understanding, and needed to do more direct teaching to help students with metacognition and reflection and self-assessment in order to build student ownership and voice.

We discussed directly teaching learner skills using clear, common language to help students apply themselves across all curricular content areas as well as with core competencies.

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?

In October, two staff members attended a professional development session on Successful Learner Traits with Sue Bannister from the Courtney School District on how specifically teaching the successful learner traits could help students learn how to apply themselves successfully and identify the characteristics/traits they have and the ones they need to develop in order to be successful learners. The Successful Learner Traits are compassionate, creative, enthusiastic, confident, thoughtful, risk taking, industrious, and strategic.

These two staff members shared with the rest of the staff who decided to embark on using the successful learner traits across the entire school. We purchased materials and teachers started to explore direct teaching of the traits with their students and reflect with each other during PLC times. It was very helpful to have the posters to refer to in each classroom and also in the library, music room, gym, and front foyer. All staff attended a pro-d session in February with Sue Bannister. Following that session, staff continued to share how they were teaching and using the traits with their students. Two other staff members spent a



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day observing at a school in Courtney where the Successful Learner Traits were being used school-wide and came back to share ideas with our staff. Staff continued to make adjustments to their teaching and shared with each other. We used some PLC time to look at our PBIS matrix and see how we could align the language and teaching of the PBIS matrix with the Successful Learner Traits. We planned ideas for how to further incorporate the traits into our school in the fall.

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

See above in professional learning.

In addition, staff worked to incorporate the Successful Learner Traits language across the day during their teaching. For example, "Thank you for being so compassionate and helping Sam when he was stuck" and "You are very industrious just like the beaver getting your jobs finished." The language was used in school assemblies, on the daily announcements, and when problem solving incidents at recess time.

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

Throughout the final term, teachers were pleased with students' ability to include their student voice on the ongoing communications of student learning being sent home. Students in Grades Two to Seven were able to reflect deeper and identify why they had been successful with their learning, relating their success to the learner traits. It was more challenging for many of the Kindergarten and Grade One students though they were able to identify with some traits and the animal's characteristics.

At year end, teachers were pleased with students' ability to reflect on one of the core competencies by describing how "I can be (Successful Learner Trait)." And "I showed this when....." Students were able to give specific examples of where they showed a particular trait in their learning or life. Teachers noted that students, especially early primary students, had more difficulty in answering, "My next step is...."

Two grade two students in one class thought about animals and traits they could represent and made their own Successful Learner Traits poster. (I tried to copy it here but couldn't so will email it separately.)

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.



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This inquiry reinforced the following for us:

- The power in all adults in the school using the same language.
- The power in direct teaching of these eight successful learner traits instead of assuming students know what they mean.
- Children's literature can help to reinforce successful learner traits as students reflect on the characters in the stories.
- Students identify with animals and having an animal represent each successful learner trait is powerful.

Future directions:

- Training for new teaching staff and our CUPE staff.
- Use of the successful learner traits language where possible throughout the school including in teaching and reinforcement of expected behaviours.
- Continue to directly teach the successful learner traits. Use children's literature and Aboriginal legends and stories to help us.
- Opportunities to highlight successful learner traits at assemblies.
- Continue to teach parents about the successful learner traits.
- Focus on the successful learner traits during our Aboriginal clan multi-age group activities at the beginning of the year and throughout the year.
- Continue to work with students on being able to determine the next steps in their learning and the successful learner traits that can help them get there.
- Connecting with other schools using Successful Learner Traits (Departure Bay Elementary and Seaview Elementary) to share ideas and learn from each other