



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: Robert Ogilvie Elementary School

School District: SD#60 Peace River North

Inquiry Team Members: Chantelle Fowler, Elsa Haug

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Type of inquiry: NOII

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

Curricular area(s): Language Arts - Literacy, Language Arts - Oral Language, Language Arts - Writing

Focus area(s): PWIM for Language Development of ELL/ESD learners

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

We wanted a better tool to help find ELL and ESD students' access points of vocabulary to build level of oral language, and use visuals and iPad apps (Explain Everything and Book Creator) to increase writing output.

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?

After meeting with teachers, we discovered that many mentioned that they believed their ELL/ESD students were speaking and listening at a satisfactory level however their writing and reading comprehension appeared lower. We decided to explore our suspicion that supporting vocabulary development and oral language would increase students access to learning. After the first few lessons, we were taken aback at basic words students did not know. When we reflected on their vocabulary knowledge we realized that PWIM was an approach we would like to explore more. Looking at the OECD principles of learning, we noticed that PWIM intrinsically allowed for individual differences of literacy achievement as it provided us with a platform to challenge all learners, while encouraging focused conversations around specific contexts and relevant learning experiences. In addition, we were hoping that using PWIM would increase students social-emotional learning by



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positively influencing their attitudes toward speaking and writing.

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

We believe our action research will benefit the ROES literacy system and minimize the SES gap, if our proposed research opportunity leads to increased literacy achievement. Our aim was to increase English Language Learners vocabulary knowledge and their ability to use this vocabulary within both their speech and writing. We used pictures to facilitate conversations and writing around a relevant context. Our goal was to increase ELL students language skills by building both their confidence and their ability to express themselves in academic and social contexts.

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.

Teachers tend to build their impressions of ELL student language acquisition based on conversations that ELL students have with teachers and students. We tend to overlook vocabulary as a key to language acquisition and comprehension, and focus on conversational oral language and academic reading and writing. We noticed that reading and writing were much lower for our ELL students than oral language, and had a hunch that if we boosted student vocabulary and oral language, we could also boost student written output.

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 researched the PWIM method, and by using a combination of coaching, reading articles, and collaboration, we developed a method of implementation. We both needed to learn how to implement the 5 phases of PWIM, use word and sentence sorts, structure sentence creation, and paragraph building. Information on PWIM posted from Saskatoon Public Schools, coaching from our District ELL Itinerant teachers, and Emily F. Calhoun's book "Teaching Beginning Reading and Writing with the Picture Word Inductive Model" were all helpful resources. The integration of iPads provided the opportunity to develop our technology skills, as we needed to learn how to use Book Creator and Explain Everything.

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



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worked out.

We put our research project into action, from Grade 2 to Grade 6. We found that the guesswork for what teachers think students know is gone, as the PWIM approach provides immediate feedback and can allow us to teach more accurately to students' zone of proximal development. Please refer to Emily F. Calhoun's "Teaching Beginning Reading and Writing with the Picture Word Inductive Model" for more information on PWIM as a teaching and learning strategy. For the word sort section, we used the "Explain Everything" app, instead of photocopying sets of words and cutting up each set for students. We also used "Book Creator" as a 'Portfolio of Learning.' Within Book Creator students also wrote out sentences and paragraphs, which are elements of the last 2 phases of PWIM.

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

Students written abilities increased significantly, alongside their confidence within both their written and spoken output. Students knew more academic (or subject specific) vocabulary at the end of the PWIM cycle, rather than general vague words to describe aspects of an image. This positively influenced the learning of all students. Students felt like they had more words in their vocabulary (synonyms) to describe their ideas. There was also very little resistance to writing tasks, and none of the negative behaviors that teachers might normally see when struggling students are asked to write. For those students who had minimal exposure to English, this approach seemingly fast tracked their learning both within the small groups and back in their classroom.

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.

We learned the influence of both a visual and pulling vocabulary from this visual to the writing process. PWIM provided us with the ability to meet students where they were at, and build upon their understanding in a low-risk manner, encouraging students to take risks and thus, building their confidence. This action research project has influenced the development of new questions, outlined below:

- 1) How can PWIM be used in Kindergarten and Grade 1 to develop phonological awareness at the same time as vocabulary development?
- 2) How can PWIM be used to explicitly teach morphology (prefixes and suffixes) by building onto vocabulary students pull out of pictures?
- 3) How can PWIM in a small group more comprehensively translate back to students' reading and writing achievement in the classroom?



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4) Does PWIM impact students Social Emotional Learning?