



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: School Board Office - District Inquiry - 5 Schools

School District: SD#60 Peace River North

Inquiry Team Members: Pat Jansen, Carleen Andrews, Moneca Conway, Sage Birley, Ashley Beerling, Melanie Carew, Barb Wagner, Kim Boettcher

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Type of inquiry: AESN Transitions

Grade levels: Secondary (8 - 12)

Curricular area(s): Transitions between Middle School and High School, High School and Post Secondary

Focus area(s): Aboriginal understandings (for example, Traditional Knowledge, oral history, reconciliation), Core competencies (for example, critical thinking, communication, problem solving), First Peoples Principles of Learning, Growth mindset, Social and emotional learning, Transitions, Confidence and Pride

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

Successful Aboriginal Student Transitions at All Levels: where our students feel confident in their abilities to enter a new learning environment, where each student understands the strengths they bring and the goals they have, so that we can ensure that they graduate with dignity, pride and options.

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 met with each grade nine student to have a conversation that was revisited throughout the year, called a Learning Journey. During these conversations we were able to gather



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evidence about how students perceive themselves in regard to their learning, as well as learn about their dreams and aspirations. We also analyzed data: Grade to Grade Transitions, Grad Rates, Grade 9 core course % passing, information gleaned from ASSWs who work closely with the students and observations of students in the Middle School and High School environments.

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

We began this journey 4 years ago. Working with the AESN has helped us to constantly re-evaluate what we are doing as educators to dig deeper into 'why' things are happening and what the students need to be successful in their school experience. After 3 years, we found that the students were now being more successful in their 4 core academic courses which we wanted, hoping they would feel more successful entering Grade 10 of the Grad Program. We thought that if they felt more confident in their abilities, they would be more inclined to attend and be more motivated in their studies. Yes, that happened BUT it wasn't all that was needed...many still did not feel they 'belonged' despite excellent, caring and committed staff at the senior high school level. We needed to support their social network at the high school in a more intensive way.

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 local high school is much larger than our middle schools and when they transitioned to another building, students had lost the connections they had with specific teachers, their Aboriginal Transition Coach and their ASSW. They needed to feel that they had 'their somebody', a person who 'cared about them and believed they would be a success'. It was just plain scary for them to transition despite June visits and caring teachers.

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?

Engagement in the Network meetings has continued to be helpful in finding times to meet



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as a group to review actions, learning from conversations with our Band Aboriginal Education Coordinators, learning from our students, learning from FNEESC, understanding the Residential School experience - reading novels, articles and viewing documentaries and learning from our Elders.

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

This year we (our Aboriginal Transition Coaches and staff) decided to continue to provide tutorials, help with attendance follow ups and reminders, preferential scheduling and advocacy with classroom teachers but we also added in more communication/social networking pathways - a ball game for all kids (80 students attended!) with grade 9s meeting the Grade 11 and 12 Aboriginal student leaders and each other from both middle schools, small group and individual visits from Middle to High school accompanied by the AB Transitions Coach, intergenerational projects, building projects, reminders of goal setting, continual confirmation that we believe they will graduate, implementation of the Learning from the Elders course (growing every year, now in the regular timetable with dedicated FTE to support), student leadership opportunities, visits to Aboriginal communities, clubs such as Spoken Word etc. that help students to feel connected - all activities to build their social networks. Also, our AB Transition Coaches from Middle Schools are planning on visits to the High School in the fall to connect with their students to alleviate any anxiety first faced in early transition.

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

We have had amazing participation in all activities designed and created for our students, both at the Middle School and at the High School. We have students attending secondary now that had previously dropped out and have now re-engaged. Our students seem to feel connected more closely to the staff at both locations and the options for gaining credits while learning more about culture is building a sense of pride in their identity. Our older students are helping to encourage our younger students and becoming peer mentors. It also seems that this initiative is becoming melded into the schools as simply part of the built in supports for our Aboriginal learners. Our learners are able to discuss their learning in more specific terms and seem to understand what steps they need to take



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to reach the goals on their Learning Journeys.

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 have learned about ourselves as a system and that sometimes what we actually think is happening or what we actually think are the barriers, really aren't the barriers. Sometimes the answers are more simplistic - we needed to have more fun with the kids in groups so that they could have help to build their social networks at the same time as helping them to experience success in academic school so that they had more confidence in themselves. Advice would include: it takes time for trust to build, be patient, persevere, look at what the adults are doing in the building, think outside the box, relationships are as important as academics in keeping a student in school, every human has to feel confident in something, our young Aboriginal students still do learn their traditional ways from their Elders, acknowledge that traditional cultural learning can and should have a place in our current school system therefore give course credit so it's valued in our system and absolutely understand that every child does have strengths - things you may not know about until you work with them - be strength based in your approach! Be a member of the AESN as the spiral will help your team to keep scanning to revise your action to support your students!