



## **Networks of Inquiry and Innovation** **Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network**

### **2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study**

**School Name: Silverthorne Elementary**

**School District: SD#54 Bulkley ValleSD#57y**

**Inquiry Team Members: Julie Krall, Aimee Richmond and full staffs**

**Inquiry Team Contact Email: jkrall@sd54.bc.ca**

**Type of inquiry: NOII**

**Grade levels: Primary (K - 3), Intermediate (4 - 7), Secondary (8 - 12)**

**Curricular area(s): All are covered as we were learning more about UDL and planning for transitions.**

**Focus area(s): Differentiated instruction, Formative assessment, Inclusion and inclusive instructional strategies, Transitions, Universal design for learning**

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

**Our vision is to create a continuum of support that involves consistent language and structures around instruction, assessment and inclusion for students and their families.**

**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?**

**During 2015-2016, staff at HSS worked together on a C.A.R.S project focused on building our collective knowledge and understanding of current FASD research and Universal Designs for Learning. We noticed through the course of our study that many of the students (some of whom are diagnosed with FASD) are becoming more engaged in their learning and instead of talking about how these students seemed to be “along for the ride” or how they were “hiding” or starting to “fade away”, we are talking about how they are being successful. The students even indicated in 1-1 student interviews that they felt supported at school and in their classrooms.**

**We are proud of our learners and we are beginning to see the benefits of the class review process and the use of the LEIC planning tool to help classroom teachers find the right**



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combination of environmental, curricular, and instructional adaptations to create a good fit for their learners.

We are concerned that without continued effort to learn about students' complex learning needs as well as Universal Designs for Learning, our hard work will not be sustainable.

We are concerned that these learners, many of whom struggle with transitions and change, will be working with new teachers and new EAs in new classroom settings next year and without ongoing training and opportunities for staff to participate in mentorship, collaboration, and co-planning experiences, our learners will once again become singled out in their classes, and may not feel part of their general education classrooms.

We are also concerned about the many students at Silverthorne Elementary that are diagnosed with FASD and the isolation of our schools' staff. We are concerned that without communication between our schools, learners and their families will continue to experience new struggles and challenges each year as they transition from one classroom environment to the next or from one school environment to the next.

We are concerned that we are losing valuable learning time for our students during transition periods as they, their teachers and educational assistants work together each year to figure out what works for them. We would like to avoid the situation where new language and new tools are introduced when students are already having to transition between grades or between elementary and high school. We know that the transition period between grades or between elementary and secondary school is a challenge for many of our students because we often see that the IEP goals students are working on in one year do not translate well to the next year or to new classroom settings.

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

We hope that cooperation and collaboration between the staffs at our two schools will create a situation where students' LEIC planning tools or environmental plans help each classroom teacher they work with to design environments where they can be successful, and where perhaps, our learners with complex learning needs will be encompassed in the planning and design of every classroom so we are no longer adapting after the design. We hope that all students will be included, from the beginning, in their classrooms.

**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.



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Each teacher begins to get to know the students at the beginning of each year or semester. It takes the teacher time to figure out each student and how they learn best. Teachers and schools use their own methods and strategies, and there is no common language from K-12.

**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 need to continue learning about the primary and secondary disabilities caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol and to continue conversations with an understanding of what students 'can't do' instead of what they 'won't do'. This greater understanding of the invisible disabilities associated with FASD will provide a common lens for us to examine our interactions with and our instruction of students with FASD. Four staff took the FASD course with Nathalie Broussard, we did learning segments at staff meetings, in newsletters and two special gatherings between the two staffs. We use POPFASD website resources for these events.**
- **We continued to become more knowledgeable about Universal Design for Learning so that the environmental, instructional, and curricular accommodations necessary for students with FASD are included in the classroom and curriculum designs from the initial planning stages. We hope that we will continue to build capacity as educators so that we can demonstrate and share the strategies and tools that we develop with other educators.**
- **We learned how to implement the planning from the LEIC Planning tool sessions.**

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

- **Staff presentation re: CARS level of involvement ( first NID)**
- **Class reviews (UDL in mind (setting goals for all, most, some)**
- **School wide student survey (winter)**
- **Newsletter updating teachers working together, new learning updates, definition of terms, etc)**
- **Student interviews (based on survey findings and staff input)**
- **February NID – Combined staffs – celebration of first half, and planning for the second half**



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- District collaboration day (opened classrooms to teachers around the district to model UDL in the classroom and shared learning during debrief)
- Grade 7 and 8 teacher collaboration involving Grade 8 teacher being selected for next year and observing a specific student in the grade 7 classroom. The intent of the observations was to look at what systems are in place that will need to continue the next year in order to ensure a quicker fit into the grade 8 classroom. The present teacher and the future teacher as well as other team members were present for a LEIC planning meeting.
- Ongoing dialogue about reaching students and designing to the edges (co planning, debriefing, class reviews)
- We did on-going collaboration (co-planning and co-teaching) between schools and internally in schools with UDL strategies in mind.
- We used survey results to change thinking about a few things such as learning needs, incorporating more cultural content. These results were surprising and initiated conversations with new perspectives about student learning.
- We tried noise repressing ear protection and pivoting stools with many of our students of all ages (K- gr.10)
- Fluorescent light coverings for some of the classrooms where the lights were too bright for some students.
- Routinely identified the difference between what students “can’t do” versus what they “won’t do.”
- Presented our strategies at NOII Symposium
- 8 full-team LEIC planning meetings across the two schools.

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

**Our learning took us to new places that we had not anticipated. We now approach goal setting differently with a more positive paradigm reflecting success for all, and we have established some new and exciting techniques that has students entering their learning and being assessed at a point of their choice. This method helps to allow students to get directly to what they know, rather than burn-out doing work that is too easy for them. We have worked together over two schools with the intent that we will have common practices for planning with UDL in mind, and for transitioning our students using the LEIC planning tool.**

**We won't know some of our transition results until next September; however, we do know that we have comprehensive plans in place that will make for more positive and informed transitions for students to their new teachers and schools. For some of our students who face challenges in this area, we have created situations where the future teachers have**



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been part of a team in planning the learning and emotional and environmental needs of the student at the present, and in the future. The teachers are already connected with the new students, and have had a chance to plan for their needs in advance.

Student Interviews gave us more specific information such as:

- “We sometimes have more than one option for doing things. I prefer paper but we could use computers, posters, voice recording, video and any other way”
- “Textbooks are hard, and reading it is hard. It is easy if one person is working with me”
- “We need to learn more culture outside and with stories and stuff and how we are able to survive outside”
- “When I try to write, I don’t understand it”
- “I’d like to learn the language (Witsuwiten)”
- “I’d like to learn more about the clans”
- “More things outside”
- “Learning knitting is fun”
- “I like technology and woodworking - how stuff was made”
- “Textbooks are hard. I like doing projects”
- “Reading helps me spell and pictures give me ideas”
- “We should do lots more art”
- “It’s hard for me to focus when I am tired”

**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.

This project has impacted the way that we as educators approach our planning, problem solving and engage in professional growth. We have been able to reflect and recognize that all students are different, and our learning environments need to be a better fit for all. The staffs also developed tremendously toward our goals of planning with UDL in mind, growing our understanding of neurobehavioural conditions, and improving transitions for some of our students by using the LEIC planning tool, co-planning and co-teaching, and observing student routines and systems.

#### **Staff Member Testimonial**

One of the biggest successes has been our use of leveled criteria and assessment throughout the buildings. This allows students to enter into their learning at an appropriate level and both find success and set attainable goals. The LEIC planning tool has shaped staff conversations around individual learners, and allowed us to work as a team to best meet the needs of those learners. One change this year has been the inclusion of previous and future teachers at these meetings. This allows us to learn from previous successes and



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inform present and future teachers of appropriate strategies and structures. This inquiry helped our teachers grow in their practice and better meet the needs of all learners. The use of UDL strategies has been a purposeful and powerful shift within our building. We are excited to continue on this learning journey next year.