



Networks of Inquiry and Innovation

Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network

2016 - 2017 AESN / NOII Case Study

School Name: WL Seaton

School District: SD#22 Vernon

Inquiry Team Members: Paul Boyd, Jackie Kersey (leaving), Julia Mawhinney, Yvonne Fiala (joining), Bernadette Louis, Rachel Marchand

Inquiry Team Contact Email: pboyd@sd22.bc.ca

Type of inquiry: AESN Transitions

Grade levels: Secondary (8 - 12)

Curricular area(s): Career Education, Language Arts - Literacy, Language Arts - Oral Language, Language Arts - Reading, Language Arts - Writing, Mathematics / Numeracy, Science, Social Studies

Focus area(s): First Peoples Principles of Learning, Flexible learning, Inclusion and inclusive instructional strategies, Transitions

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

Building off what we learned last year, we focused on: communication, needs, Aboriginal Content, and Counselling.

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?

Being the second year we really jumped to looking at the experiences of our learners - more discussions with them - what was helping and what was still needed. It was clear that although not as academically high achieving, they were still very connected to the school and were going to make it to graduation. The strongest theme continued to be meeting basic needs before anything else. We all agreed that the methods promoted in First Peoples Principles of Learning are valuable for all students and that the majority of those methods were all ready being used by teachers throughout our school. The label may not have been attached, but certainly the ideology was in place. We are very fortunate to have two excellent First Nation Support Teachers in our school that are not only a great help to our students, but an excellent resource for our teachers.

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



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In our initial year we spent a lot of time meeting with our First Nations students discussing what the school was doing well, what we could improve on and if there were things we could get rid of. Using the information gathered we focused on increasing communication - we discovered that not all students were aware of the services and opportunities available to them; meeting individual needs - it is impossible to expect any student to be successful if they are having to worry about basics such as housing, food, and basic school supplies; Aboriginal Content - making sure that there was meaningful, naturally embedded First Nations content throughout the school; Counselling, in particular post-secondary and employment, there are several programs and opportunities specifically for First Nations learners, we need a person, that could be shared with all district schools, that specializes in gathering and sharing this information.

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.

Building a strong genuine rapport with students and taking the time to meet basic human needs before expecting them to take on academic challenges is key. If students don't have to worry about their next meal, they are much better equipped to learn.

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?

No specific learning, but lots of conversation and sharing of information about various students and making sure connections were being built between students and adults.

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

Meal programs - breakfast and lunch is provided at the school virtually every day. In addition there is a "food bank" within the school that allows students that need to take food home over the weekend. The room is also stocked with necessary school supplies. We found the community is eager to help.

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

The first year of this inquiry we had a very high grad rate and a high rate of transition to post-secondary. This past year, the academic focus was not as high, but when we look at what the current grad class accomplished there is still lots to celebrate. In grade 8 there were 21 identified First nations students in the class, at graduation there were 22. Although we see successes, we still have more work to do, there are still improvements to be made in terms of successfully transitioning our First nations students to post-secondary.

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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We have learned that meeting the most basic of needs and building relationships are key. A community in the truest sense has been built within the school and in many cases out into the community as well. We have learned that you can never communicate too much, there are still kids being missed that don't know what opportunities there are for them. Although over all counselling time has been increased, we are still pushing to have dedicated First nations counselor to help with transitioning from high school to post-secondary.