



2017-2018 Yukon Education Learning Networks: Empowering and Engaging Others in an Inquiry-Based Professional Learning Network Celebration of Learning Discussion Template

Yukon Education

School: Vanier Catholic

Inquiry Team Members: Barb Bergsma and Amanda Cann

Your focus for this year: Investigating the levels of student communication skills will allow us (LATs) to assist students in developing their abilities to ask for the adaptations and support they need for success.

Scanning:

Pre scan discussion: What are the core skills or competencies that will help our students succeed in the new curriculum? Can we make these into a portfolio that could assist in them earning credits? Is anyone else working on this kind of project?

1) We have completed our scan through all staff and vulnerable (IEP, SSP and ELL) student questionnaires using the four key questions. (See attached questionnaires)

2) *Our findings from staff and students revealed that the core competency of communication was an area of need among many of our vulnerable learners.* In conjunction with this as LATs/ Case Managers, we are aware of the new IEP format that includes student input for "My Interests" and "My Learning Preferences" and "What you need to know about me."

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

We (Barb & Amanda, LAT's) chose to focus on the area of communication, because after our school staff scan, we discovered that this was an area of need for our students to receive support in based on teachers/EA's responses. We planned on going through the Communication Core Competency Profile to extract the key vocabulary and "I" statements from this list. From this list, we hope to develop examples and potential lessons in order to teach students how to communicate effectively in various situations. (ie. improve communication at student led conferences, communication between teachers, peers and parents and on IEP documentation). We may also explore methods in which to assist with the exploration of learning preferences.

Hunch:

Our hunch is that, when we teach students how to communicate their own strengths and stretches as a learner, they will be better able to communicate in regards to their learning needs in the areas of learning preferences, environmental learning needs and academics which should enhance their overall personal awareness.

New professional learning: Structure for research:

1. Investigate "I statements" for secondary students (Curriculum website).

We ended up finding information about positive self talk and how to change negative self talk into positive self talk. (January 2018)

2. Interest questionnaire or my story development.

We developed the questionnaire and administered the questionnaire to 30 students across the school from grade of 8 to 12. (February and March 2018)

3. Learning Preference screens or teaching tools.

We researched to find the latest information on learning preferences and found the article by Tomlinson about Understanding Your Learning Style after querying the department of education about a definition for learning preferences without a clear definition of what is to be used for this section in IEPs or SSPs. We read several articles that helped clarify learning preferences.

4. Universal Support List : Might be a good idea to go over this list with students individually so that we can let them know what supports that are entitled to ask for, or to try in their classroom setting.

Taking action: Describe strategies you and your team decided on and how your actions worked out. Be as specific as possible – so that other teams can learn from your experience. Consider also gather evidence of your innovative actions using the following table as a guide:

From our initial student survey we developed a questionnaire based on the IEP communication headings that are to be filled out by the student. These were given to IEP and SSP students to find out about their abilities and comfort level in responding to these statements. (see attached Student Spiral Questionnaire). Our findings indicated that there was a significant difference between Junior (Grade 8 & 9) students and Senior (Grade 10, 11, and 12) students. The differences mainly appeared between their comfort level of sharing their information as well as their responses in regards to their interests, and learning preferences. Another result that stood out was that students with language difficulties, whether receptive or expressive language disorders, as well as ELL or non-ELL struggled in the area of communication even when it is of non-academic nature.

Seven Principles of Learning in an Innovative Learning Environment		
What works for learners?	What this means for LEADERS	My evidence ...
Put learners at the centre	Leaders must be relentlessly curious about what's going on for students in the system. Student learning is the driving force, but students aren't the only learners. In an innovative learning environment, everyone is a learner, including teachers, support staff, formal leaders, parents and others.	We decided to give a questionnaire to some vulnerable students in regards to their interests, and their learning preferences along with their ease of communicating this information. We chose this because it is reflective of what IEP students need to complete within the realm of their IEP. We administered approximately 30 questionnaires to grade 8 to 12 students who are all

		<p>vulnerable learners in our school (IEP, SSP or ELL). Our action has now been clarified in that we need to divide our instruction between senior and junior level students. Barb will target students with language or emotional difficulties in order to help them communicate their learning needs. Amanda will target grade 8 and 9 students in regards to helping students clarify their interests, learning preferences and how to share their needs with teachers in order to help them feel more comfortable sharing this type of information, and learning about themselves as a student.</p>
Emphasize the social nature of learning	Leaders collaborate, cooperate, and support networked learning.	Recognizing that these skills are not only academic in nature, but also apply outside of the school setting within social networks.
Understand that emotions are central to learning	Leaders understand and apply the dynamics of social and emotional learning. They are attuned to their own emotions and motivations, and to the emotions and motivations of others—including the positives, like satisfaction and self-efficacy; and the negatives, like helplessness and anxiety. They understand how emotions affect performance.	There was a significant difference in comfort level of students in sharing information about themselves. This will be shared with staff and considered in future instruction.
Recognize individual differences	Leaders understand the dynamics of their team members, including their strengths, interests, experiences, and gaps in learning. They draw on these differences and help everyone in the system to develop through carefully designed professional learning.	The questionnaire assisted us in learning about the individual differences of students even beyond the academic view point. Students may need individualized support in certain areas in order to enhance their communication skills.

Stretch all learners	Leaders stretch themselves and others, but they avoid overload or stress that diminishes performance.	
Use assessment for learning	Leaders set clear expectations while being open to new possibilities. They continually assess what is working and where the gaps are. They always consider qualitative data as well as quantitative data. They seek and give meaningful feedback to promote learning.	With more scaffolding provided at an individual level, students will be more successful with their communication skills due to increased self awareness and self advocacy skills.
Build horizontal connections	Leaders are connectors. They connect activities, ideas and people, in and out of school. Their connections include partnerships in the community, with other schools, and with organizations at a distance.	

Checking: Summarize the differences you made. Were they enough? Were you satisfied? What did you use as baseline - and change - evidence? How much richer are your learners' answers to the four questions?

We will re-administer the same survey next year after some individualized instruction in regards to student communication learning needs. We will compare this to our data gathered this year as our baseline data. We were satisfied with our results as it gave us a deeper look at our students communication skills in a focused area. It was not the results we had expected, so we are glad we pursued this investigation. The Senior students need more emphasis on expressing their learning needs, while the junior students need support in understanding their learning preferences and support in terms of their comfort level of sharing this information.

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 a lot about the process of the Spiral, and the reflection and research needed to make constructive change in student learning and performance.

Amanda and Barb will now have different next steps due to the data we collected.

Barb will work with senior students one on one to improve their self awareness and communication. Barb will use the Universal Support list or Adaptation List from the IEP to facilitate discussion about learning preferences, assist in developing sentence frames or role playing for student teacher discussions so that students are more comfortable expressing their needs to teachers.

Amanda will focus on teaching grade 8's and 9's about learning preferences and how they can determine their own learning preferences. Amanda will do this in small groups of students whom we know are comfortable with each other. Some students may need one on one support in this realm. This group of students also needs help with informing teachers of their needs and we are hoping that this will come via the session about learning preferences. This might also be facilitated through role-playing. These students were also the ones who were uncomfortable sharing this sort of information on our questionnaire.

NOII is dedicated to:

EVERY learner crossing the stage with dignity, purpose and options.

ALL learners leaving our settings more curious than when they arrive.

*ALL learners gaining an understanding of and respect for Yukon First Nations ways of knowing
and doing.*