



School Inquiry Project Application (2021-2022)

School: Alert Bay Elementary

School Team: Jen Turner, Judith Lowe

How will focusing on developing a growth mindset in our students as writers, and improving staff formative assessment practices, as well as updating Writing Resources, have an impact on student achievement in written work measured by BC Performance Standards, Performance Standards Quick Scales in Writing, I can statements, class/teacher made rubrics, and school-wide writes.

1. Scanning: What's going on for your learners? How do you know?
 - What student achievement evidence are you looking at?
 - What is your baseline data?

Our curiosity was first stimulated by a workshop one of our school team attended with Adrienne Gear. In the 2020-2021 school year we've noticed our students, from K – 5, are not always risk-taking when writing or know how to begin a write. Some don't even see themselves as writers, and need a lot of adult help to even get started with their writing. When asked 'How is it going with your learning? Your writing?' some will respond "I can't write." "I don't know how to write." "I don't know what to write" and "I'm not a writer." We gathered data; in the Spring of 2021 and, 35% of our students didn't know what to write about or needed help getting started on the school wide write. We noticed our School Wide write data was lower than it has been in a few years. We noticed a significant drop in the number of students that could write descriptively without any help. In K, many students say 'I'm not a writer – I can't write yet' and we have collected early samples of first attempts. In grade 3, and in grade 5, two children will be our 'wonder' – these children typifies the 'dependent' writer who can do little without checking with the teacher first. We'll watch these two closely and collect samples of change over time in these two students, but also in all our classrooms.

2. Focusing: Where does your focus need to be? Why is this important? Where would you concentrate your focus to change the results and the experience of your learners?

We were inspired by attending Adrienne Gear and Story Workshop events, and have tried a little already in our classrooms. We are excited to see some

progress already, and think working together in a focused way as a school on these strategies will have a great impact on students' view of themselves as successful writers. We'd like to see confident, excited writers for all our students, eager to share their writing with various audiences, as well as classmates, younger children, sharing in the library.

3. Developing a Hunch: What's leading to this situation? (Focus on the areas over which educators have control - not parents, the system or the learner)

In the past, there was not a lot of subject matter choice – we all wrote about the same thing. And students all wrote for one audience – the teacher. We feel that's not authentic, and does not connect to student interest or passion. We have a hunch that students are placing too much emphasis on spelling, neatness, the 'look' of the writing instead of the content. We feel shifting that focus will free them up to take risks and be real writers.

4. Professional Learning: What do the professionals in your building need to learn? How will this learning occur? What resources can you access? How will you build in multiple opportunities for learning?

During structured professional learning time we would like to explore "Writing Power" by Adrienne Gear as a school team and use it as a framework for our weekly writing plan. Writing Power is a practical and thoughtful resource that shows teachers how to encourage students to consider the reader's thinking as they write. Using the same five thinking strategies from Adrienne Gear's ground-breaking Reading Power books Connect, Question, Visualize, Infer, and Transform young writers will learn how to engage and invite their readers' thinking through their writing. Writing Power guides teachers through a series of lessons focusing on each of the strategies and includes scripted, sequential lessons, recommended anchor books, reproducible, and uses formative assessment rubrics.

5. Taking Action: What are you doing about it? What will staff do differently? How will you know if it's working? (Incorporate the 3 levels of Response To Intervention)
 - What are the roles of Teachers, Support Staff, Principals and Vice-Principals in the inquiry?

Set up a Base-line Data:

Our school will complete a school wide write in September to begin our baseline for the year. Our School Wide Write results were lower last Spring than they have

Adapted from Dr. Judy Halbert and Dr. Linda Kaser *"Spirals of Inquiry: For Equity and Quality"*

been in the last few years. Even though an assessment was completed in the Spring, we want to start fresh with the students in September, as there are several students who are starting new at our school and we want to track their progress over time.

At our Staff in-service Day, we start as a staff with A Powerful Year of Writing Building an Effective Process-Based Writing Program Throughout the Year. This is a 4 Part Webinar Series by Adrienne Gear. In this four part webinar series based on Adrienne's new book Powerful Writing Structures, participants will learn how to develop an effective process-based writing program. We will work alongside Adrienne as she shows us how to set writing goals, develop a writing routine with our students, teach a wide range of mini lessons, establish a balance between structure and unstructured writing time, and explore writing structures including personal narrative, nonfiction, and story writing.

Session 1

Introduction and Planning Your Year

September

- Writing Beliefs
- What is an Effective Writing Program?
Process vs. Product
- Weekly Writing Routine - Plan Draft Revise
- Writing Goals, Writing Folders
- Three Writing Structures:
Personal Narrative, Nonfiction, Story Writing
- Brain Pocket Writing
- Formative Assessment

Session 2

Personal Narrative Writing

October

- Writing Structure Focus: Personal Narrative Writing - What is it?
- Walking Stories - Anchor Books and Mini Lessons
- Event Stories - Anchor Books and Mini Lessons

Session 3

Nonfiction Writing

November

- Writing Structure Focus: Nonfiction Writing
- Introducing the 6 structures: Description, Instruction, Persuasion, Comparison, Explanation, Biography

- Anchor Books, Mini Lessons, Student samples, links to content - including Indigenous content
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Session 4

Story Writing

January

- Check-in and Questions
- Writing Structure Focus: Story Writing
- Elements of Story - Setting, Character, B-M=E, Problem-Solution, Ending
- Deconstructing Stories - Comparing traditional with indigenous stories
- Mini Lessons and Anchor Books: Character Development, Problem-Solution, Dialogue, Transitions, Ending

As a staff we will Set up a Writing Plan School Wide:

One of the most important aspects of an effective writing program is establishing a writing routine. Students work better when they know what is expected of them. The weekly writing routine is based on three stages of the writing process: Plan, Draft, Revise. Each week, over the course of three weeks, the students will spend time working on a short practice write, focusing on one stage of the writing process per day. This way, when students see Writing Power or Writing Workshop on their agenda, they know exactly what is expected of them each day. New writing skills are introduced or reinforced through weekly mini lessons and students will apply the new skill or technique to their weekly practice writes.

We are also committed to check-ins throughout the school year at monthly staff meetings and quarterly marking sessions to discuss how the year in writing is going for our children and for us as teachers.

6. Checking: Have you made enough of a difference? What evidence will you be seeking to know you are making a difference?
 - When will you check in and how often?
 - How can you do it in a way that allow for immediate adjustment?
 - 30 minutes devoted in every staff meeting
 - Additional meetings to mark and discuss School Wide Writes in September, December, March and June
 - School Based In-service Days 2021-2022
 - Comparing our School Wide Write Results in September, December, March and June to check to see how our learners are doing, and see if we need to adjust anything.

- Classroom Observations and Assessments using the BC Performance Standards Quick Scales in Writing
- Growth Mindset pre and post survey based on “I Can” statements from Core Competencies (developed by staff for September 2021)

Signatures:

School Principal

Staff Rep

(VINTA, CUPE)

