



School Inquiry Project Application (2021-2022)

School: Sea View Elementary/Junior Secondary School

School Team: Emma Robertson

“Does connecting with our natural environment lead to students taking on a role of stewardship of the land and local community?”

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?

Staff, students and community have expressed an interest in furthering our connection to the local natural environment through meaningful, planned activities that engage students. By learning real-life applications students will be encouraged to make wise use of the natural resources around us.

For the 2021-2022 school year, we would like to begin a new Inquiry Project focused on enhancing student learning experiences and ensuring that all students are actively involved in their learning journey. After over a year of minimizing contact with external partners and the wider community due to CoViD-19, staff have noticed that some students have had difficulty interacting with their peers and focusing in the traditional, indoor, classroom environment. We also observed that some students do not appear to take care of the school environment, leaving garbage outside and expecting others to clean up after them in class. We believe that by spending more time learning from nature, students may experience many benefits socially and emotionally, as well as develop a greater sense of respect and responsibility to care for the environment.

We have observed that many of our students participate well in hands-on, collaborative learning activities as opposed to traditional textbook, desk-based learning. Teachers have been creating opportunities for our students to learn about the local lands, cultures, and language in ways that brings learning to life. Some of our students are not yet fully meeting outcomes for their grade level in literacy (particularly writing skills) and we wonder if weaving an environmental theme across all curricula subject areas would help students connect to their written work.

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?

2021-2022 will be our first year of implementing this cross-curricular, place-based inquiry. In this first year of what may become a 2-3 year long Inquiry Project, our focus will be on creating an integrated community of learners. We hope that we will be able to involve community volunteers and experts who can act as role models so that by the end of the first year, all students are excited about and engaged in their learning. We would like to see students develop a role of stewardship over their local environment, starting with their school and home, behaving with *maya'xala* - respect for themselves, others, and the environment.

Our focus will be on incorporating the theme of ocean ecosystems (specifically: salmon/'kutala and the orca/max'inux) across many curricular areas so that all students become 'experts' at this topic. Students should feel confident in demonstrating their learning in a variety of ways, including real-world applications of the knowledge. We hope students will make connections to their land-based learning experience when they engage with texts and produce writing. Students may learn geometry in the garden, make connections to their own social structures through comparisons with the orca family structures, learn about ecosystems by studying the ocean, and do math while cooking from ingredients they have picked themselves. There are many real-world applications for writing such as creating posters to warn about the dangers of pollution to the ecosystem, producing informational leaflets about the various ocean fauna, and creative story writing about sea creatures, both real and imaginary.

We also identify the following areas of focus for our staff:

- Staff collaboration and cross-curricular planning to create learning opportunities on the land.
- Theme-based lessons, rather than purely classes blocked as a specific subject such as purely Art or Science.
- Increase community relationships and connections – bring in local experts in marine biology & local plants, connect with Elders who have traditional knowledge of the ways of harvesting plants and wildlife, host community information nights to showcase student learning.

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)

There have been many contributing factors to this situation such as recent high staff turn-over and relative isolation due to CoViD-19. Things have been very different for the students this year and over the past few years there has been more reliance on technology and use of screens, especially in 2020 when some students were learning at home and online. We are seeing a need for students to get outside and reconnect with nature, and feel a need to reopen connections with community to help support student development.

We predict that attendance issues/tardiness will be reduced for students who have attendance issues, if they are able to learn outdoors through relevant, engaging activities. Engagement with academic learning is better when students feel connected to two or more adults and to their school community during learning activities. Teachers will endeavour to provide meaningful learning opportunities in a variety of settings.

We believe that by students connecting with the local natural environment we will be using many of the OECD's core principles of learning which also align with the First Peoples' Principles of Learning.

- Learners need to be at the centre of their learning and fully involved
- Learning is social in nature
- Connecting emotionally is integral to learning
- All students should be stretched (growth mindset, supported to reach beyond their current levels)
- Stories help us remember

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?

- Staff will be encouraged to choose professional development opportunities with a focus on place-based/project-based/passion-based learning.
- Invite community members who have local place-based knowledge to work with students on the land.
- Collaborate with other schools who have already developed comprehensive place-based programs.
- Teachers should set goals for each curricular area and include place-based learning lessons in their curricular overviews with explicit links to curricular competencies and Big Ideas.
- More professional development is needed on how to teach in a more

integrated, cross-curricular approach with meaningful project-based learning (not as a separate stand-alone session).

- Make time for collaboration.

5. Taking Action: What are you doing about it? What will staff do differently? How will you know if it's working?

- Principal will ensure that the monthly staff meeting is a place to share learning and collaborate. We will check in at each staff meeting.
- Teachers will look for opportunities to produce meaningful lessons outside as much as possible.
- Teachers will collaborate with administration to organize field trips.
- Teachers will work with the FNEA and request Elder and Role Model participation in learning activities.
- School staff will look into developing a dedicated outdoor classroom space and Principal will communicate with district.
- Fund raising for field trips and outdoor classroom space.

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? – regularly at staff meetings (see above). How can you do it in a way that allow for immediate adjustment?

We will use a variety of ways to assess if we are making a difference. Most of the ways to assess will be observational in the first year and we will review progress at the end of each term and adjust our Inquiry Project focus as needed.

Things we will be seeking to assess if we are making a difference:

- Fewer behavioural referrals to the office at break and lunchtime (healthier relationships between peers).
- More diverse groups working together for a common purpose – eg, students choose to work with others outside their usual peer group, students choose to work with others based on a common area of interest such as building a structure, community clean up, designing a website, etc.
- Classroom teachers work together often on outdoor lessons and projects.
- More students taking on leadership roles in the intermediate grades.
- Classes will host community events to showcase their learning.
- Students take more ownership and responsibility for their surroundings (cleaner school grounds).
- Elders and Community members are involved in learning experiences.
- Student attendance records (and post CoViD enrollment) indicates higher attendance.

- Students appear happy, healthy, and excited about learning new things.

Signatures:

School Principal

Staff Rep

(VINTA, CUPE)

