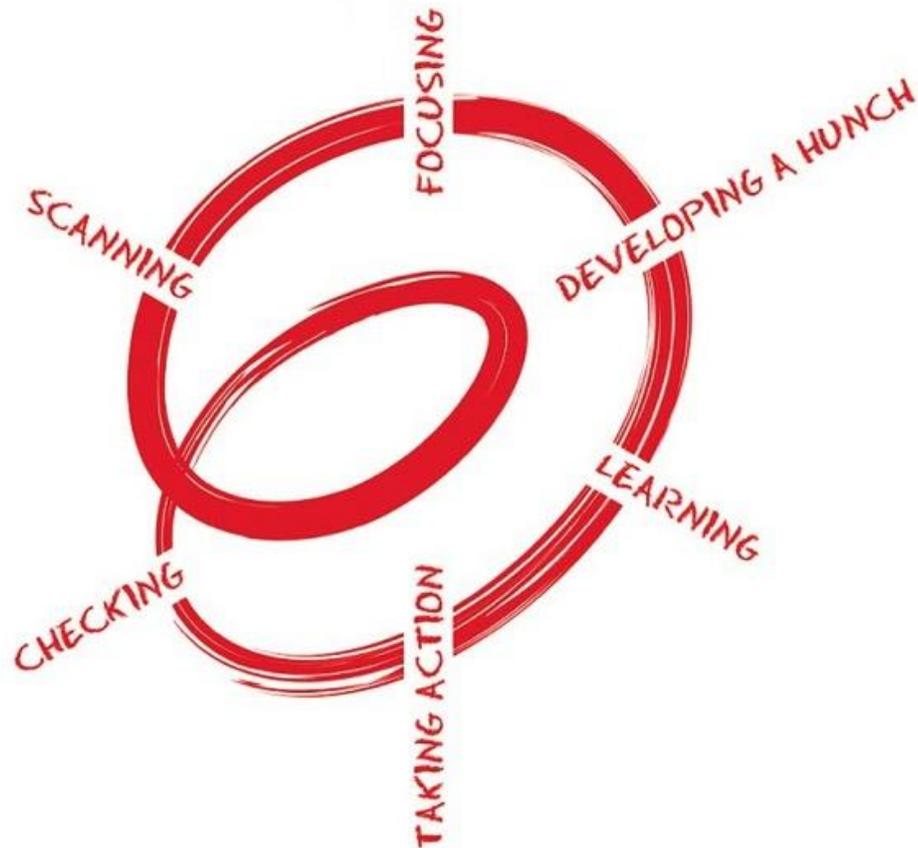




School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) School Growth Plan



"Spirals of Inquiry for equity and quality"
Judy Halbert and Linda Kaser

School: ConnectEd

Distributed Learning / Home Learners Continuing Education / Access

School Context:

ConnectEd is a teacher-led Kindergarten to Adult school that is an umbrella school for a number of unique education programs, including Continuing Education, Home Learners, Junior and Senior Alternate, and Distributed Learning. All of these programs provide options for students and families. Students are enrolled at ConnectEd, which is a public school, and the student program is the responsibility of ConnectEd.

Each student's learning is supervised by a teacher certified in British Columbia (parents are not teachers, but may help facilitate their child's learning).

Each student must be assessed on a regular basis, and receive provincial letter grades, report cards and a permanent student record – just the same as they would in any B.C. neighbourhood school.

Upon meeting requirements for graduation, students will receive a British Columbia Dogwood certificate.

We offer families:

- resources, support, and instructional assistance needed to plan and deliver a quality educational program reflective of individual needs, values and philosophies
- one-on-one student support services; i.e. tutorials, Moodle study lounge
- ongoing communication between families and our staff, using a variety of modes
- teacher-led ongoing assessment and evaluation, linked directly to Provincial learning outcomes
- options in methods of course delivery, such as paper-based or online, determined after consultation with teachers
- unique opportunities for students to work with peers on an ongoing basis through a variety of activities

Scanning in 2018-19:

What scanning is and isn't:

Scanning involves inquiry and evidence-seeking mindsets; scanning is not about seeking evidence to reinforce the status quo.

Scanning takes a wide perspective on learning - not just a focus on aspects of academic learning that are easily measured.

Scanning is about what is happening for all learners from their perspectives and those of their families - not just the perspectives of the professionals.

As an extension of our 2017-18 Spirals process, our entire staff felt the need to explore student voice within the work we have been doing around growth mindset. The team at ConnectEd firmly believes that we are a key support option for our entire community and that student success requires educators to think creatively when it comes to learning options. The team planned to continue working with Growth Mindset and self-assessment through the competencies, but to shift our focus and learning more toward student voice. The goal was to encourage our students to own their learning and to find their identity as members of our community.

- 1) All staff asked their students the same 4 Spirals of Inquiry questions we asked last year. As a team we debriefed the responses which moved us to the focussing stage of the Spirals. It also clarified for us that we needed to continue our intentional instruction around Growth Mindset.

Focusing 2018-19:

What focusing is and isn't

Focusing uses information from the scan to begin to clarify where energies need to be invested - this is not the time to introduce completely new areas.

Focusing usually requires collection of further information to clarify what is happening. Don't assume you know. "How do we know? Why does this matter?" are especially important questions to ask in this phase.

Focusing should include strengths or positives as well as problems and challenges.

How can our staff collaborate with our students to collect authentic feedback around how their education is going and what they perceive as beneficial instructional additions?

- 1) Our team collaborated to create a 9 question survey. We discussed the benefit of who would interview, where the interviews would happen, and whether we would record the interviews or not.
- 2) Individual interviews took place between our Youth Worker and 21 Alternate students ranging from Grade 7 to Grade 12.

Our team reviewed both sets of responses from our students and discussed what changes we could make to our instruction or programming.

Developing a Hunch:

What developing hunches is and isn't

Developing hunches involves getting deeply held beliefs and assumptions out on the table. It doesn't involve a general brainstorm of all possibilities.

Developing hunches focuses on how the educational professionals are contributing to what's working and to what's not working.

Hunches are about professional practice – not about other factors. Developing hunches is about opening up thinking and possibilities – it is not about venting or finding someone to blame.

We believed our Access students felt they didn't have a voice in their academic pathway. This translated to the fact that they felt powerless in regards to the courses they needed to take for graduation and in translation, their learning. We also believed that the majority didn't see how most of their course work related to the skills they needed to thrive as adult members of society.

As such, our hunch was that many of our students left school not feeling equipped to tackle their adult life. From experience, following that hunch, our staff felt that the vast majority of our Access students would benefit significantly from intentional instruction on foundational life skills such as laundry, budgeting, taxes, community services, etc.

An additional challenge we discussed was that many of our students typically become uncomfortable when asked to share their opinion. This is not something they have traditionally been asked to do and was a consideration if we wanted authentic responses.

Inquiry Question: What additional supports can we put into place at ConnectEd that will encourage our students to have a voice that will be heard and be equipped to be successful when they graduate or leave school?

New Learning:

What professional learning is and isn't

Professional learning is the core business of all educators. It is what we do!

Professional learning is connected to the identified learning needs of young people. It isn't about the latest new thing.

Collaborative Professional Learning: (staff met face to face to review plan around our inquiry)

Embedded in all Staff Meetings

Becoming a Growth Mindset School by Chris Hildrew

September

- <https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/>
- <https://medium.com/benefit-mindset/the-nature-of-mindsets-18afba2ac890>
- <https://www.edutopia.org/discussion/empowering-student-voice-through-classroom-culture>
- Spirals process - Self-Assessment and the Competencies – *Staff were asked to interview 5 students and provide feedback*

October - Self Discipline and Grit

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ft_DXwgUXB0
- https://www.ted.com/talks/angela_lee_duckworth_grit_the_power_of_passion_and_perseverance

November

- Growth Mindset and Effective Feedback Article
- Student Voice – Kapernick Nike Video.
- Power of Praise Article

December

- Teach Like Finland book, Timothy Walker – reflection on health and wellness of staff and students

January – affirmations

- <https://7mindsets.com/affirmations-for-teens/>
- How to Fix Apathy Problem in Schools article

February – Trauma and Mental Health Mindset

- Review of Stan Kucher work (powerpoint) and Mental Health.org website

March

- Review student surveys and article on Decoding the Teenage Brain
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/decoding-teenage-brain-3-charts>
- Begin creating Life Skills Course
- Boys Don't Cry video– discussion
- Arrange Foundry Tour

April

- Altruism (inate or learned) – Video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfGAen6QiUE>
- Coping with Trauma - <https://www.mentalhealth.org/get-help/trauma>
- Stan Kutcher video – 5 things for Optimal Well-Being (service conversation)

May

- Staff tour of Foundry
- Reviewed altruism, resiliency, and the impact of service on our students
- Review and plan next steps for 2019/2020 Outdoor Education program
- Review future plan for Mindset Mondays

Taking Action:

What taking action is and isn't:

Taking action is about thinking more deeply about new ideas – and then taking informed action. It's not just about implementing a set of strategies.

Taking action is informed by a deep understanding of why some practices are more powerful than others. It's not just trying things out.

Taking action involves understanding that when doing something differently, effectiveness is judged by the impact on learners and their learning. It isn't about getting the teaching practices right.

Below are the two surveys that we conducted this year. Both surveys resulted in the actionable items listed below in our checking phase and next steps.

Student Survey #1 – Four Questions

Where are you going with your learning?

What are you learning? What are the big ideas you are exploring? Why is this important?

Make it clear that your question is about what they are learning right now, perhaps in a specific subject area.

Listen for: The purpose of what they are learning in their own words. The distinction between the task (what they are *doing*) and the purpose (what they are learning and why). That they can connect it to life outside school. Probe as much as you need to get as full an understanding as possible.

How are you doing?

What would you like to tell others about how you're doing with your learning? How do you know how you're doing?

Listen for: The extent to which learners understand the criteria for strong work in this particular area. Can they identify their own strengths and the areas for additional focus? Have they internalized the criteria or are they dependent on teacher judgment?

Where to next?

Tell me what the next piece of learning is for you. What do you need to do to get better at this?

Listen for: Do learners know what they need to do to get better in this particular area of learning and how they will do it? Can they articulate the specific next steps?

Can you name TWO adults in this school who believe you will be a success in life?

How do they show you that they believe in you?

Some discussion about what is meant by success in life may be appropriate. From our perspective, success in life must include 'Crossing the stage with dignity, purpose and options' for life after secondary school.

Listen for: the extent to which students can provide specific examples of the range of ways in which adults are demonstrating their belief in their future success.

Student Survey #2

ConnectEd Student Survey February/March 2019 – (Answers included in blue font)

Over the month of February and March we conducted a survey with the students of ConnectEd. The participants range in age from 13-18 years old.

Our Education Assistant, Alison Haupapa presented the questions to the students.

Question #1

What are your interests outside of school?

- Working
- Hanging out with friends
- Hiking
- Hanging out with my dog
- Working out
- Drawing and painting
- Skateboarding
- Swimming
- Video games
- Music

Question #2

Can you name something you are good at?

This question had various answers including: video games, cleaning, helping people, music, singing, hockey, working, reading, determination, perseverance, computer programming, makeup, hockey, art, being positive.

Question #3

Have you learned about mindset over the past few years?

*19 students Yes
2 students No*

This was a follow up from our inquiry from 2017/2018.

Question #4

Do you understand the difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset?

*19 students Yes
2 students No*

Question #5

Is it applicable outside of school and have you used it?

19 students Yes

2 students No

Question #6

Do you think you have a voice in your education/ learning?

20 students Yes

1 student No

Question #7

What are students not learning in school that they should?

17 students stated that they need to learn how to do their taxes.

Other answers included:

- Anxiety and mental health issues*
- Budgeting*
- Sex Education*
- Hand Writing*
- Lifeskills*

Question #8

How can we improve this School?

15 students voiced that they think ConnectEd is excellent and does not need to improve on anything.

Other answers included:

- More one on one*
- More group activities*
- More art and cooking*
- Walks around the Pen High Track*

Question #9

What do you like about this school?

- Camaraderie*
- Welcoming environment*
- Lots of one on one help*
- Family atmosphere*
- Teachers*
- Personal connections*
- Small, like a community*
- It lowers anxiety*

- *Flexible hours*
- *Everything*
- *Freedom*
- *Self paced*
- *Feels like a home environment and safe*

Checking and Next Steps:

What checking is and isn't

Checking is fundamental to the inquiry spiral and to an evidence-seeking mindset. It is not just a routine to follow.

The checking has high expectations that inquiry, new professional learning and action make a substantial difference for all learners - not just a little difference for some learners.

Checking turns assessment into information about the effectiveness of teaching and what can be done about it.

Checking is part of an on-going spiral of inquiry. It is not done just at the end of the term or year. It is done regularly so that adjustments can be made in a timely fashion.

- Creation of BAA Futures 12 Course (Life Skills). Implementation for 2019. Present to CDAC committee and seek approval from the Board.
- Bi-Monthly presentations/discussions from outside agency and business owners around topics that pertain to our young adults as they navigate topics such as financial literacy, healthy grocery shopping, Provincial services, etc.
- Implementation of Outdoor Learning Program 2019/2020 – extension of current program. This initiative is now being financially supported by the District which is a critical aspect for it to be an annual addition to our alternate programming.
- Follow up survey in Fall (November) of 2019 with students to reassess the impact of programming and revisit student needs.
- Continue to have our school plan and inquiry as a standing item at all Staff Meetings with aspect of new learning as well as team discussion.
- Review Mindset Monday format and continue intentional instruction around Growth Mindset with specific lessons on topics such as resiliency, empathy, altruism, failure, strength based language, etc.