

Denman Island Community School PLC Project

What is our School Staff Focusing on for their PLC Time?

We at Denman Island Community School wanted to focus on creating a vibrant and engaging community school where students are excited about learning and trying new things in a safe learning space, mentored by staff and community members, engaged in life-long learning, and connected to the community in meaningful ways.

Why did we choose this goal?

With many staff and community changes the previous years the school population and decreased and attendance has become very small and transient. We looked at the attendance records from last year, as one of the base line data pieces. In the months of October and November of 2013 there were over 123 students late to school, and 140 absences. There are many reasons that students miss school, and we wanted to create a happy space where children wanted to be, come and learn.

What was our Action Plan?

We began revamping our code of conduct at our school to ensure our school is a safe place for students, staff, parents and the community. We have been worked on agreements with students and staff about our rights and responsibilities as members of our school community and invited Parents, students and community members to come to PAC Meetings to look through the draft document and see if the community felt changes were needed.

We then brainstormed with students and staff activities to build community and engage students at school through community building activities and placed based learning projects.

Nearly a century ago, John Dewey called for experiential learning that engages students in their own environments. There is a growing body of research on the benefits of place-based learning. Among them: higher test scores, better grade point averages, improved classroom behavior, increased self-esteem and problem-solving abilities, and higher-level thinking skills which are some of the reasons that our staff, parents and community members started working several years ago on a different vision for our school that would align with this way of teaching, using our amazing natural environment for the betterment of the education for our students.

Place-based learning begins with asking questions such as, "Where am I? What is the natural and social history of this place? How does this place fit into the larger world?"

Successful place-based programs involve students as participants in the life of their communities. Successful projects demonstrate many of the following characteristics:

Learning takes students out of the classroom and into the community and natural environment.

(Run/ Walk/ Jog, EDAS, Field Trips, We Are Here Music Video, Awesome Wall)

Projects have consequences; students' contributions make a difference to environmental quality and to the well-being of communities.

(Feasty Fridays, EDAS, Giving Back to the Community, Volunteer Tea, Reusable Grocery Bags for the Denman General Store Earth Day Art Project, Adopt A Beach Program in Partnership with our Marine Stewards)

Place-based projects are integrated back into classroom lessons.

(Oceans themed unit partnered local with Marine Stewards and Commercial Fisherman to study surrounding food chains and the Herring Fishery)

Students want to learn in order to apply their knowledge to solving real problems.

(EDAS, I Can Projects, Herring Fishery and its impact on the environment, the fish stocks, and the global market, School Gardens)



Students play an active role in defining and shaping projects.

(We Are Here, Winter Concert at the Hall, I Can Projects, Island Hockey Tournament, Basketball Tournament, Rookie Rugby, Garden Mural with Artist Rose Robin)



Students collaborate with local citizens, organizations, agencies, businesses, and government. Working alongside community members, students help make plans that shape the future of their social, physical, and economic environments

(SPARKS program and mentors, Garden Mural)



By mapping their school and its surrounding community, students create visual representations of the systems nested within larger systems that constitute their local place in its wholeness

(Herring Fishery and oceans study)



Who was on the PLC Team?

- Karla Neuffer
- Phil Apter
- Jen Turner

How are we going to measure and track if we are achieving this goal?

One of the indicators' that a school is engaging and safe for children to learn is their attendance in the building. We have attendance records from last year, and will compare them to attendance this year.

We sent home to Parents and the community a school culture and climate survey, which we did again in May. This information allowed us to gather feedback of who was actually engaged on

the basic level of coming to school every day. We also did this survey with students to make sure their voice was heard.

One of the questions on the school survey

What has been successful this year?

Attendance for this year has significantly improved. In October and November of 2014 there were only 18 students late to school, and only 32 absences. Students are actively engaged and have created with staff and community support hockey programs, martial arts classes, winter and spring concerts, murals, pottery classes, Art Adventures, Student Leadership Clubs, creating theme days for the school, garden projects, a music video, a song recording, an awesome wall, and all of these moments, events, and clubs, demonstrate such pride in their school.

From the Survey Results people were asked to name one word that now describes their school:

- Welcoming
- Connected
- Homey
- Exciting
- Friendly
- Awesome
- Fun
- Engaging
- Loving
- Inclusive

Parents, Students Community and Staff Strongly Agreed that the school feels:

- Safe
- Comfortable
- Welcoming
- Engaging
- There was someone to greet the children each day
- There were a lot of learning opportunities and activities provided at the school
- That they felt included in the school and had meaningful input into the community school
- supported

