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Wellington Secondary School

School District #68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith

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Our team

Our Healthy Schools Team was made up of two teacher leaders, Gina Goertzen and Lynn Brown. Tom Mason Wellington's physical education department head along with Carol Girard vice-principal and Steve Thompson principal of Wellington Secondary were also involved and supportive of this inquiry. Twenty-four PE 11 girls took part in this inquiry as part of their PE 11 Fit4Life course. It is important to note that the inquiry could not have proceeded without the support of the administration, staff and students of Coal Tyee Elementary School and South Wellington Elementary School.

Our story

With the support of Wellington's PE department head and the schools' administration PE 11 Fit4Life, a girls only physical education class, was offered as new course at Wellington Secondary this year. This course was locally designed to help promote higher enrollment of girls in senior PE. This course offers healthy living options and choices of activities for girls.

At the beginning of the course a "community of learners" was created by the students. The girls worked together to formulate their expectations for the class around communication, control of self, commitment and cooperation with others. Through this process the girls created posters to identify what their "community of learners" should look like, sound like and feel like. From these posters the girls created an assessment rubric based on the 4Cs.

We then created an inquiry question to drive our course. This is what we came up with:

How will engaging in physical activity of our choice and learning about the importance of daily physical activity change our thoughts, beliefs and actions towards living a healthy lifestyle and help us to encourage others to do the same?

The next step for the class was to select **their choices** for activities that would promote healthy living. The girls decided that their choices should be divided into three categories: **life-long fitness activities; life-long recreational activities and life-long sport**. We all worked together to set a schedule, book activities and find ways to make things happen. Some of the activities that they chose to take part in were: sailing, hiking Mt. Benson, a ropes course at Wildplay Nanaimo, yoga, step aerobics, weight training, golf, tennis, archery, curling and many more.



About a month into the course the girls were wondering how they could look at the second part of their question, “*help us to encourage others to do the same?* “ After having discussions about my class with our Instructional Coach, Lynn Brown, Lynn and I decided that she would come into the class. Lynn’s presentation inspired the PE girls. The class decided to use the inquiry approach that Lynn illustrated and with her help we jumped right in and the girls created the following inquiry question: *How will designing and peer coaching (a variety of activities went here) to elementary students change their thoughts, beliefs and actions towards living a healthy lifestyle and inspire them to be physically active* What is daily physical activity? How much daily physical activity do you need? What are the types of physical activity? What are the benefits of physical activity?

Seven groups of students created their own inquiry question around peer coaching. Each group prepared to peer coach a different activity as part of their inquiry. The activities the girls selected were hopscotch, Chinese skipping, jump rope activities, hula hoop activities, yoga, Pilates and dance. Each group researched the benefits daily physical activity and used that information to create a power point presentation to share at the elementary schools. The girls also researched and practiced their specific group activities. Their power points included instructions on how to do their activities and information around the following:

From the work this class was doing and because we were embedded in their process Lynn and I created our Healthy Schools Inquiry question:

How will engaging in physical activity of their choice and learning about the importance of daily physical activity, help PE 11 girls to change their thoughts, beliefs and actions about peer coaching elementary students to learn about healthy living?

The groups practiced their peer teaching three times with their classmates and followed by verbal and written reflections about their teaching. This helped them to improve their instructional techniques and be better prepared for peer coaching at the elementary schools.

On the day we went to Coal Tyee to peer coach, the girls were well prepared and fully engaged in the experience. The principal of Coal Tyee School was so impressed with the girls’ work, that he invited the girls back to teach another day. In all the girls taught two days in at Coal Tyee as well twelve of these girls felt so strongly about their learning that they went to South Wellington School in the second semester after their PE Fit4Life class was over to peer coach there. Some of these twelve students were videotaped by DASH. <http://www.dashbc.ca/dash-in-action/videos/>



All the girls prepared a presentation for a showcase of their learning. They invited a friend, parent or relative to join them in this celebration of learning. Many of the girls prepared power points while some of the girls created posters. After this celebration, four of the students stepped forward to take what they had learned through their inquiry and report it to the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School Board at a school board meeting and also to the Wellington staff at a staff meeting.

Reflections

What worked? What worked well was the inquiry process itself. Each level of inquiry led us to another inquiry question. The students got so involved in their own learning taking real ownership in it. There were several times for reflection throughout the process. These reflections were used as formative assessment which really personalized student learning.

The demonstration of student learning in their personal showcases at the end of the course was amazing. Each of the girls brought in a guest to share in a celebration of their learning. They focused on talking about how having choice and taking part in the peer coaching had changed their thoughts, beliefs and actions towards living a healthy lifestyle.

What would we rethink? Our inquiry question was too big. All the girls commented at the end of the semester that we took on too much. Either the *choice* part of the question or the *peer coaching* part of the question would have been enough. It would have allowed the girls to go into more depth with their learning.

What is next? As a result of the girls taking their learning to the staff, several staff members have come forward to talk about joining with me to create a school wide healthy school inquiry question for next year. Three of the students have indicated that as a result of their peer coaching experience they plan to go into teaching in the future.

Our PE department is looking at creating a peer coaching component to our senior classes to support links with our elementary feeder schools and to support student learning through peer coaching. We are looking at targeting fundamental movement skills to support physical literacy with our elementary feeder schools.



