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# Cinnabar Celebrates

A SET-BC Classroom Suite Inquiry



## Project Overview

The SET-BC inquiry project was inspired by the Cinnabar Valley primary team's focus on Joyful Literacy. In late spring of 2016, two teachers, Mrs. Miscavish and Ms. Collins, felt the process of applying for the inquiry grant would be a great way to collaborate about and share experiences with a literacy focus. The initial result was the addition of technology into the pre-existing literacy based programs, which promotes emergent literacy goals in fun, 'joyful' ways.

The SET-BC Classroom Suite project was implemented in two classrooms (Grade 1 and Grade 1 & 2) at Cinnabar Valley Elementary School. Cinnabar Valley is a small K-7 school on the outskirts of Nanaimo, in School District 68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith. Both classes had access to the technology and software and used the laptops on a daily basis for various learning activities.

Cinnabar Valley was supplied with 11 MacBook Pro computers (ten student computers and one teacher computer), necessary HDMI converters, a document camera, and a digital camera.

The project goal for both classes were essentially to provide increased opportunities for the children to read and write to further their fluency in both areas and to assess whether or not the use of technology fit with the *Joyful Literacy* approaches already being used. Students in both classes were presented with 5 sight words a week and were assessed on them at the end of each week to evaluate whether mastery was achieved. Through the use of Dr. Mort's *bubble sheet* tracking, teachers could monitor progress.

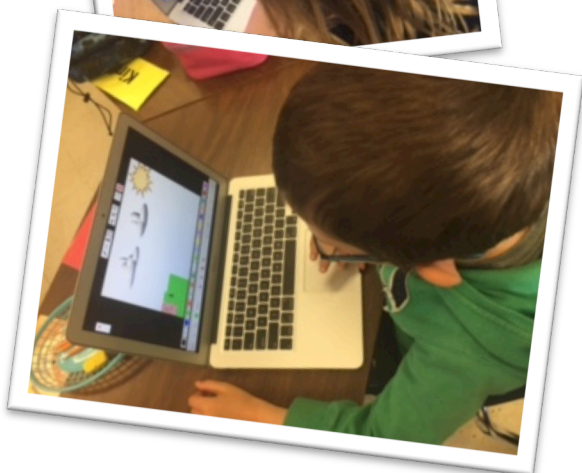
## What is Joyful Literacy?

Joyful Literacy is an approach to teaching reading in a fun way. Our focus was on quick recall of the Dolch High Frequency Sight words through interventions and regular assessment for mastery with the implementation of a play-based environment. Naturally, the motivation of technology was welcomed by all learners.

See

<https://joyfulliteracy.com/> for more information.



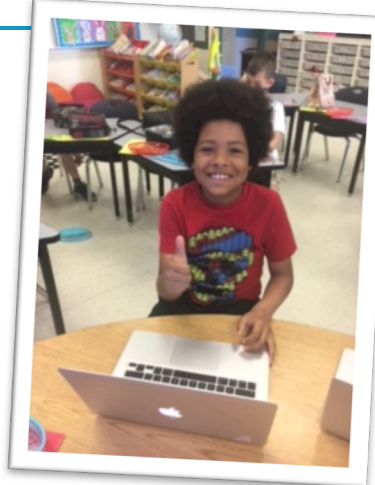


## Project Implementation

Both classroom teachers attended the initial training in June and briefly used the teacher computer in the spring of 2016. The remaining ten laptops were received by the school district in early fall, but unfortunately, were not processed and prepared for classroom use until the end of October, therefore, the implementation was somewhat challenged and delayed at first. Having the classroom teachers attend the training at SET-BC in Vancouver allowed for true collaboration and a shared learning experience. SET-BC also provided collaboration time and networking opportunities through monthly meetings with project participants from across BC and with the project coordinator, Elyssa Derban and technology mentor, Scott McKay. This ongoing discussion allowed for regular check-ins, which truly resulted in furthered understanding of what these tools could be used for and beyond.

### Main challenges and how we overcame them:

- Initially, some of the computers had a hard time connecting with the airdrop function. It is suspected that this was due to poor Wi-Fi in certain areas of the school. A mentor from SET-BC, named Merryl, met with one of the teachers to support and guide her to further the development of this process.
- **Airdropping** continued to be the largest obstacle for the program, mostly because of the amount of time that had to be taken to actually send the items to ten different computers. Eventually, teachers by trained two mature grade two students to help with the airdropping process.
- Linked to the airdropping, was the **time** that it would take to do the airdropping. Having students do the airdropping was effective, but at times, they needed a lot of support, so this would then take away from other students' needs.
- When **individualizing** the Classroom Suite activities, it was sometimes difficult to know exactly how many questions to put into each activity as teachers wanted to have a substantial amount to make the airdropping process worthwhile, but at the same time, if the activity was too long it would lose students' attention quickly and the element of success and 'joy' was sometimes lost. Also, students would need to put the computer away or give it to someone else in the middle of it if the student was a slower worker or wasn't provided with enough time to complete the activity. Eventually, this struggle was overcome when teachers decided that 'checking' the students' performance with the laptops was not a priority and that the activities were going to be used more for *practice* and *learning*.
- **Storage** was, and continues to be, a major concern with this. The project did not receive any support for storing and charging these computers. The laptops are put into an internal office of the school and charged on a trolley. They are easily accessible to anyone with a key.
- **Overcoming challenges** with the laptops became part of the process. Instead of stressing of focusing on them, the students and teachers took the opportunity to reflect on what having this software and technology in the classroom could do for them. As a team, it was decided that the focus would be on independence and the many core competencies that were learned.



## Successes and Overall Achievements

- Increased fluency and **sight word recognition** were the biggest successes with this inquiry. Not only did all students further their knowledge of emerging reading skills, but they also found ways to incorporate their reading into their writing through the journals.
- Increased **independence** with technology was a massive result of this project. Teachers had hoped for this, however, observing students' ability to independently acquire the computers, walk with them safely, turn them on and off, navigate to websites (saved in bookmarks) and login to Classroom Suite, has been the biggest success. All students demonstrated enthusiasm for using the technology and they have become a **regular tool** used for learning, instead of the former stressful **event** of 'taking the students to the computer lab'.
- An additional success of the inquiry was how **self-regulated** the students became. Over the year, teachers observed students finding comfortable ways to use the technology with success. In one of the classes, it eliminated classroom wandering and constant question asking during literacy centres. Instead, students supported each other to help them to solve their problems and they were intrinsically motivated to be independent problem solvers; resulting in some amazing socially responsible interactions with peers. In fact, this inquiry, unexpectedly, led to consistent and specific reflections of many of the core competencies. In the future, a parent volunteer would be requested to assist with the airdropping on a weekly basis.

## Recommendations and Reflections



- The Classroom Suite software is dated, but this didn't seem to be an issue for most of the learners. If anything, they found the stunted instructional voice to be humorous at first and quickly got used to it. At times, the images were confusing, however, this encouraged increased focus for the students to consider comprehension and context when trying to figure out what the image could possibly be. They had to be problem solvers to remember how to review the words again.
- In the future, a parent volunteer would be requested to assist with the airdropping on a weekly basis.

## Summary

Overall, we were so grateful for this learning opportunity, not only for our students, but as educators, too. This project provided us with a meaningful way to collaborate, reflect and extend our own practice. We appreciated the monthly conference calls and were able to utilize some of the tools and strategies shared by colleagues from around the province, not just in our classrooms, but also with our staff members – truly creating a ripple effect! We feel incorporating technology into the classroom through our SET-BC inquiry project was very successful. There were so many benefits outside our original goal of increasing student sight word recognition in a “Joyful” way. Technological independence, partner/group collaboration, problem solving opportunities, peer teaching and the ability for students to be working at their own level led to high student engagement and success! One of the big differences for both classroom teachers in educational practice was the shift of using technology in the classroom as a “tool” rather than an “event.” We already have a plan to incorporate the laptops by using student leaders from this project in the first two weeks of school next September. Sharing their knowledge and collaborating right away will keep the learning moving forward. Again, thanks to SET-BC for this amazing opportunity!

