

## *An invitation* to participate in an international study of *SmartLearning*

September 12, 2012

To: All K-12 educators implementing and/or supporting the implementation of *SmartLearning*

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012 the University of Otago in Dunedin New Zealand granted approval for a research project designed to examine the impact of the *SmartLearning* project on student outcomes. The aims of the study are to identify the key elements of the research-informed practice used by the teachers, and to assess the impact of that practice on student outcomes.

The questions of this study are:

- What are the key elements of the research-informed practice used by the teachers in the *SmartLearning* project?
- What is the impact of this practice used by the teachers in the *SmartLearning* Project on student outcomes?

You have been implementing and reflecting on the effects of *SmartLearning* for some time now, and we would like to invite you to participate in this international study. The inquiry-based action research will include educators from many jurisdictions in B.C., Alberta and the Northern Territories. We would be honoured to have you involved. To date teams from Penticton, Greater Victoria, Invermere/Golden, New Westminster, Burnaby, Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows, Ft.St. John, Williams Lake, Cowichan Valley, and the Wild Rose School Division in Alberta are being formed.

You may be wondering why the study will be conducted through a university in New Zealand. Megan Anakin, a long time advocate for *SmartLearning* is currently engaged in a PhD programme at the University of Otago, and she will be the major researcher for the study. Her professor Jeff Smith, a highly acclaimed leader in international academic circles, will oversee the study.

We do not see the study adding much extra to your workload. Your main goal will be to implement the components of *SmartLearning* like you have done in the past, and over time gather a few documents to show the effects of *SmartLearning* on your students.

Details of the study are outlined on the attached information sheet and on the protocol for the study.

During the study you would be asked to:

- Use the 2012-2013 A•S•K Assessment process to gather and reflect on assessment data three times during the year. In elementary you will also be asked to gather word knowledge using the orthographic continuum outlined in *Words Their Way* (Pearson).
- Use the information gathered on a **Class Trends Sheet** and the A•S•K Skills Continuum for your grade, to guide your planning and teaching.  
Note: We now have a draft A•S•K Skills Continuum for Kindergarten. The A•S•K Skills Continuum for each grade was derived from the B.C. Performance Standards (1998) and the Kindergarten Literacy Continua (2008).
- Submit a few plans, student samples and reflections during the year.

We will streamline the process by providing a check-list of items to be included and a cover sheet for submissions.

The 2012-2013 version of the A•S•K assessment received rave reviews during the launch at a recent summer conference. The A•S•K was developed over three years and field-tested across the grades through inquiry-based action research cycles in B.C. and Alberta. The process aligns with the teaching in *SmartLearning*, and assesses important skills now embedded in every curriculum. They also happen to be skills learners need for critical thinking, critical literacy and self-regulation.

The A•S•K assessment process can be used with any text, fiction or non-fiction, at any grade. It was designed as a stand-alone process for assessing reading and responding K-12. During our field-testing the teachers asked us to include the texts for the assessment, and to include the tasks and the prompts for activating prior knowledge, generating questions and predicting.

Texts and a set of prompts will be provided in grades 3-9 for the baseline, mid-year/mid-semester, and end-of-the-year assessment. For Grade 1 and 2, the teachers decided to use leveled texts. Many will use texts from the Pearson Assessment Kit or from PM Benchmarks. In Kindergarten the teachers will be use the A•S•K Skills Continuum to guide assessment.

Jennifer Delvecchio, a teacher-librarian/consultant, and teams of teachers involved in the *SmartLearning* project chose the first set of texts for use with the A•S•K. Over time we plan to develop a bank of texts for the baseline, mid-year/semester, end-of-year assessments, so teachers have choices. A permission process precedes text selection and each author/publisher receives remuneration for use of the text.

Since educators and students are involved in the project, Board approval is necessary for the research. If you would like to participate in this study, please talk to your principal, and your superintendent or district leader. Your superintendent has received a letter of invitation that outlines details of the study.

We will be working with the participating districts to develop plans for local interactions.

Findings from over twenty years of inquiry-based action research have led to the current model of *SmartLearning*. Each cycle of research has helped to refine our understandings about learning and has led to the development of new tools for guiding learners to sophisticated places in their achievement.

The refined *SmartLearning* process will form the foundation for the 2012-2013 research project. We have attached a copy for you. The model has stood the test of time, and the continual refinement of practices based on new learning has been its greatest asset. Through this international study the *SmartLearning* practices, and the effects of those practices on learning, will be situated in the scholarly literature.

We hope you, and possibly a team of colleagues, will choose to participate in this important study. Please share this invitation with anyone you think might be interested.

If you are thinking of participating in the study, please email me at [susan@susanclose.ca](mailto:susan@susanclose.ca), and discuss the project with your administrator and district leader/s. The research will be underway in all of the districts by mid-October. Please also feel free to contact me with any questions. Thank you for your continued work with *SmartLearning*. All the best for a great start to the school year!

Sincerely,

Susan Close

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