

July, 2010... an update

Where are we now with SmartLearning?

We have a cadre of *SmartLearning* leaders in place in this province, educators at all levels of the system polished in research-proven and time-tested ways to enhance the brainpower and achievement of all learners. All are leading initiatives that show how *SmartLearning* equips learners with the attitudes and skills necessary for 21st century learning.

We have developed layers of leaders, people leading *SmartLearning* initiatives at the district, school and classroom levels -- in a wide range of districts across this fine province. We now have over 70 people leading training cycles, workshops, and institutes -- here in B.C. and in other jurisdictions, including Alberta, the Northern Territories, and China. They come from districts with widely diverse populations:

Greater Victoria, Cowichan Valley, Burnaby, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, New Westminster, Haida Gwaii, Ft. St. John, Penticton, Naramata, Vernon, Smithers, Nelson, South Slokan, Creston, Grand Forks, Cranbrook, Invermere, Kimberley, Golden, Williams Lake, Stettler, Rocky Mountain House, Drayton Valley... In some of the jurisdictions teams of leaders, whole schools, families of schools or whole divisions are working towards implementing the system of practices: Brentwood Park Elementary in SD41, Windermere Elementary in SD6, Giant's Head Elementary in SD73, and the Lambrick Family of Schools (SD61) -- Lambrick Park Secondary, Gordon Head Middle School, Hillcrest Elementary, Torquay Elementary -- Clearview and the Wild Rose School Divisions in Alberta -- *just to name a few...*

Recently we hosted an invitational *SmartLearning* leadership retreat on Salt Spring Island. Registration surprised us. The retreat was full days after it was announced. Megan Anakin, a *SmartLearning* trainer doing her PhD in New Zealand, participated via Skype. Raffi, the famous musician and founder of the Child Honouring Centre on Salt Spring Island, joined the group for a brief time and delivered a poignant address about a global initiative to improve the lives of children ~ all over the world. He commended the work of *SmartLearning* and invited the delegates to join the global initiative. Margriet Ruurs, the internationally acclaimed author, vibrantly shared the inspiration behind many of her famous books and showed ways to bring the writer out of every learner. A newspaper article about the event has been added to the media coverage section on the website: [SSI the spot for serious SmartLearning.](#)

SmartLearning practices continue to be refined through cycles of research, and they stand very tall as ways to consistently produce dramatic gains in achievement. Please see the paper on the website under resources/articles/[HIEC January, 2009.](#) During the presentation Georgia Nieken and I showed the dramatic effects of *SmartLearning* on one district's achievement -- over time. In the fall of 1999 a headline sent a sense of urgency ripping through the community, "*New Westminster Bottom Again!*" and three years later that same paper announced, "*Writing Scores Soar!*" Just look at the achievement graphs. They show the power of staying the course; they tell a story to be proud of.

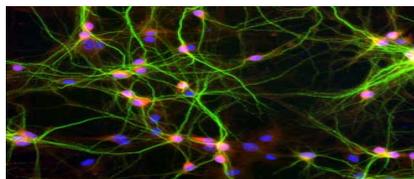
Jurisdictions in other parts of our country and in different parts of the world are showing deep interest in *SmartLearning*. We now have projects up and running in two Alberta divisions, and are supporting the development of a plan to take *SmartLearning* to Peru.

Last October the former president of the parliament of Peru, now the head of a law firm, joined us in Vancouver for our fall *SmartLearning* conference, "*Motivating Minds: a framework and tools for Smarter Learning*." He had combed the globe for an approach that would develop leaders in his country -- thinkers prepared to embrace and solve global challenges -- and he found that in the system of practices called *SmartLearning*.

What is it that makes *SmartLearning* so successful? How is it different from other approaches? In a nutshell, we develop a growth mindset in learners with a message that *you and your brain can become smarter, and with the simple strategies we teach you, you will see evidence of this every day in your personalized work*. That message kindles deep attachment and motivation for learning. We engage learners in structured partner-talk and complex tasks to build purpose and ownership for learning, and to honour and expand the thinking of everyone involved. We show learners images of the brain making connections during reading, listening, speaking, recalling... and we show them how specific learning strategies exercise both hemispheres in the brain and help to activate and build strong pathways for memory. We show them how thinking in images and thinking in words builds cognitive flexibility... and stimulates multi-sensory pathways in the brain. We talk about how effort ignites ability and turns it into accomplishment, and how effort and going beyond a comfort zone stretches abilities. We talk about brain plasticity and the capacity of the brain to change with learning. We talk about time, and what the brain needs to do - over time - to turn information into deep understanding. We talk about how the brain never stops changing through learning, and that learning a repertoire of strategies -- *SmartThinking tools* -- will help them guide, enhance and self-regulate their own learning process. We equip them with tools for setting, reaching for, achieving and reflecting on higher goals. And we talk about the power of focus and determination ~ determination honed to reach those important personally-set goals.

We give learners little *brainbytes* - quotes from neuroscience and learning research - that explain the brain science behind their learning. For example, their eyes light up when we show an image and talk about the neuroscience behind why we always work on challenging tasks:

The more complex the task... the more complex the sequence of communication between the neurons needed to complete it. More complexity means greater learning. (Gomez-Pinella, 2008)



People with a growth mindset thrive when they are stretching themselves into being smarter. Believing talents can be developed allows people to fulfill their potential. We tell them an ability can be learned, and the task will give them a chance to do that. (Dweck, 2006)

You know when you are in a *SmartLearning* classroom; all of the learners feel valued, respected, included, and accountable. They know they are working on challenging tasks, and they fully embrace learning. The learning is truly differentiated with each learner reaching to develop and express his or her ever-increasing understandings, in personally relevant ways. I really do not know of any other approach that can say that.

These *grown in B.C. practices* have stood the test of time, and consistently realize stunning results. In an hour you can see visible differences in the learners. We are hearing wonderful success stories emerging from so many classrooms.

Awhile back Ingrid Fawcett, a member of the SD61 Greater Victoria Learning Initiatives team, gave provincial leaders a glimpse into the power of *SmartLearning* when she presented a few short video clips of students engaged in *SmartLearning* activities during a presentation at a literacy summit hosted by the Premier Gordon Campbell. SD61 has been working on *SmartLearning* initiatives for over ten years now and with the guidance of the Learning Initiative's team including facilitators Ingrid Fawcett and Petra Eggert, the practices continue to be at the heart of the district work to enhance all students' learning – especially the learning of vulnerable students.

Similar work is being conducted by teams around the province. Last Friday, SD8 Superintendent Pat Dooley inspired leaders with powerful stories emerging out of Rockridge, and SD6 where a cadre of teachers has been working with Assistant Superintendent Barb Morris to apply and extend their applications of *Smartlearning*. Stacey Decosse shared some of those same applications during our recent *SmartLearning* leadership retreat on Salt Spring Island. Findings from all of the teams attending the retreat will be posted on the website by the end of the summer.

Bev Young, SD54 Superintendent has just finished conducting learning conversations with each of her schools, and mentioned in an email that the positive work of *SmartLearning* certainly was a theme -- particularly of the people who have done the *SmartLearning* rounds with Ann Nottingham and Erika Warkentin -- and how the learning rounds deepened and influenced the work of others. Next year they will be ready to go deeper with planning.

SmartLearning is an approach that has stood the test of time; it is a system of promising practices that offers educators a framework and a set of elegantly simple tools to use to prepare learners with the attitudes and skills necessary for 21st century learning.

SmartLearning offers great hope and a pathway to achieve a vision for what is possible for learners – big and small. We are very glad you chose to read this update, and we hope to see you soon at one of our upcoming events.

Have a wonderful summer! Thank you for your interest in SmartLearning.

P.S. The quote below was given to me by Kelly Ranford, one of our *SmartLearning* trainers, and I give it to you as you reflect on all of the amazing work being done with learners around the world. We all have seeds in our hearts to grow into flowers. sc

“Find the seed at the bottom of your heart and bring forth a flower”

Shigenori Kameoka

Below are some important items:

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Summer 2010 *SmartLearning* Events & a List of 2010 events to date

1. Find details of summer activities on the coming events page:

August 23-24, Norman Wells, NT: Susan Close

A Focus on *SmartLearning*,

Keynote address (August 23): Putting the Brain in the Frame: how teaching with the brain in mind differentiates learning, kindles motivation, and stimulates more powerful expression and understanding... in **all** learners

Workshop (August 24), Up and Running with *SmartLearning*: getting started with the framework and tools during the first weeks of school



August 25-27, Williams Lake: Susan Close and a team of trainers

Simply Smarter ~ more power to the brain... *you and your brain can become smarter*. Teaching learners from '3 to '103' how to harness cognitive powers and how to set, reach for, and achieve higher goals

August 24-25, Nelson: Carrie Ng

SmartLearning: Igniting Brainpower and Differentiating Learning for Elementary Students

August 26-27, Cranbrook: Robin Speed

SmartLearning: Igniting Brainpower and Differentiating Learning for Secondary Students

September 2, Victoria, with the Lambrick Park Family of Schools: Susan Close and learning facilitators Petra Eggert and Ingrid Fawcett

Keynote address: *SmartLearning*: a model for brain-based teaching and learning

Workshops: Teaching with the Brain in Mind ~ strategies for stimulating richer thinking and deeper understanding in *all* learners

2. 2010... the first six months: A wealth of learning opportunities for people new to *SmartLearning* and for people seeking to go deeper...

So many workshops, learning rounds and training cycles over the year have brought new people into *SmartLearning*, and have furthered the learning of others seeking to learn more.

Thank you to all of the district administrators, coordinators, school-based administrators, learning facilitators, trainers, workshop leaders, classroom-based teachers and students who worked so hard to bring these events to life. Your thoughtful work has made a huge difference to so many learners ~ big and small!

Be sure to see some of the reflections from *SmartLearning* round participants on the [website's reflections page...](#) Seeing the practices in action, in classrooms has a powerful effect on everyone involved.

Many of the 2010 *SmartLearning* interactions below were not listed on the website's coming events page. Each one was designed with context-specific goals in mind. Next year we will add every event to the site. That way interested people will be able to contact the leaders to learn more about specific events:

- A keynote address: *More power with SmartLearning*: going deeper with the framework and tools, for SD61 Greater Victoria, Learning Connections' teams, given by Susan Close (January 6, 2010) – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning*
- Eight *SmartLearning* training sessions, including workshops and *SmartLearning* Rounds for SD54, Bulkley Valley Intermediate (3-7) teachers, led by Ann Nottingham in Smithers, B.C. (Sept.23/24, Nov.25/26, Jan.27/28, April14/15, 2010) – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning*
- *Moving Forward*: developing the literacy skills for adults with developmental disabilities, an HRSDC (Human Resources Social Development Canada) Pilot Project, led by pilot project coordinator and *SmartLearning* trainer, Joey Sahli (March, 2009 through to March, 2011)
- A one-day *SmartLearning* workshop at SFU for 33 teachers from Korea (Jan.22, 2010) followed by a series of *SmartLearning* rounds at Brentwood Park Elementary, led by Georgia Nieken and host teachers at the school (Jan.26, 2010) – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning*
- An evening presentation for parents and community members, *SmartLearning: powerful ways to fuel thinking and ignite brainpower... at any age held*, in SD71Comox Valley, led by Susan Close in Courtenay, B.C. (Feb.7, 2010)
- A keynote address, followed by a full-day workshop, *Motivating Minds: a framework and tools for smarter learning* for SD71Comox Valley, led by Susan Close (Feb.8, 2010)
- A *SmartLearning* round designed for 18 secondary educators from Korea, led by Georgia Nieken, and set in Sandra Barnett's grade seven class at SD41Brentwood Park Elementary School (Feb.12, 2010) – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning*
- An introduction to *SmartLearning* at Burnsvew Secondary in Delta, led by Robin Speed (Feb.12, 2010)

- An introduction to *SmartLearning* for UVIC student teachers, presented by Nadine Naughton (February, 2010)
- A secondary *SmartLearning* Round (February, 18, 2010) followed by two *SmartLearning* workshops for SD82 educators, led by Robin Speed in Hazelton, B.C (February 19, 2010) – a site with growing applications of *SmartLearning*
- A *SmartLearning* workshop: *teaching for a new decade; more power to the brain*, followed by two days of *SmartLearning* rounds for SD8 administrators and teachers, led by Susan Close in Nelson, South Slokan & Creston – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning* (Feb.16-18, 2010)
- A one-day workshop: *Motivating Minds with SmartLearning* offered during a SD41, Burnaby district-wide Pro-D day, co-led by Georgia Nieken and Deb Taylor (Feb.26, 2010)
- *An introduction to SmartLearning: teaching for a new decade; teaching with the brain in mind*, a full-day workshop for district administrators and team leaders in the Wild Rose School Division (Rocky Mountain House, Alberta), followed by two days of *SmartLearning* rounds in gr.1, gr.4, and gr.6 classrooms in Drayton Valley, led by Susan Close (Feb.24-26, 2010)
- Junior and Senior Secondary *SmartLearning* rounds led by Tammy Renyard and Sandy MacKay in Drayton Valley, Wild Rose School Division (March 10 & 11, 2010)
- A Benefit: Hope for Haiti – Through Hands and Hearts working Together, a full-day Saturday workshop, *Inspiring Minds; more power to the brain*, hosted by SD61, Greater Victoria in partnership with Susan Close Learning, led by Susan Close, Ingrid Fawcett and Georgia Nieken (March 27, 2010)
- *SmartLearning: a framework for motivating minds: a two-part series for SD42 schools*, led by Georgia Nieken and Kim Bondi in Maple Ridge (Nov.5, 2009; April 1, 2010) – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning*,
- An introductory *SmartLearning* workshop for SD22 administrators and a workshop for teachers, led by Susan Close in Vernon, B.C. (April 27, 2010)
- *SmartLearning* Rounds for SD6 French Immersion teachers, led by Keri Roberts in Golden B.C. – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning* (April 12-14, 2010)
- *SmartLearning, a neuroscience model for teaching and learning*; an analysis of the research connections between instructional models, for graduate students taking Leading for Learning, Teacher Leadership and Principal Preparation through UNBC in Williams Lake B.C., led by Elaine Elliott (April - June, 2010) – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning*
- An introduction to *SmartLearning* at St. Mary's Catholic Independent School in Cranbrook, led by Susan Close (May 3, 2010)

- A summative *SmartLearning* focus day for SD6 leaders, led by Susan Close in Invermere – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning* (May 4, 2010)
- Workshops and K-6 *SmartLearning* rounds led by Susan Close and Erika Warkentin in the Clearview School Division, Alberta at Stettler Elementary School (May 6-7 & 10-12, 2010) – a site with growing applications of *SmartLearning*
- A *SmartLearning* round and workshop designed for 33 English teachers from Hong Kong, led by Georgia Nieken and situated in classrooms at Brentwood Park Elementary School in Burnaby (May 12, 2010) – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning*
- A *SmartLearning* Leadership Retreat held on Salt Spring Island, B.C., led by Susan Close (June 6 & 7, 2010)
- An introductory *SmartLearning* workshop for SD22 administrators and a workshop for teachers, led by Susan Close in Kamloops (June 10, 2010)
- A one-day *SmartLearning* workshop and classroom demonstrations developed for 18 principals from Hong Kong, led by Georgia Nieken and a host of Brentwood Park elementary teachers (May 28, 2010) – a site with many applications of *SmartLearning*
- An introduction to *SmartLearning*, a two-day workshop for the Wild Rose School Division, led by Susan Close in Rocky Mountain House (May 28, 2010) – a site with growing applications of *SmartLearning*
- An introduction to *SmartLearning* presented by Patrick McManus for educators teaching in B.C. schools in China (June 2, 2010).
- An introduction to *SmartLearning: using coaching cards to develop rich oral language*, at the Rwentutu Educational Project, established by the Umoja Compassion Project in Uganda ~ workshops and side-by-side teaching led by Carrie Ng and Tracy Fulton (July, 2010). Carrie is a teacher and one of our *SmartLearning* trainers, and Tracy her Mom is a principal in SD40. Tracy and teams of teachers accompanying her to the site have been supporting the school's development for over four years.

How wonderful is that!

What a note to start the summer on. Safe travels and safe home...

An Irish blessing!

Susan Close