

SmartLearning Training...one implementation model

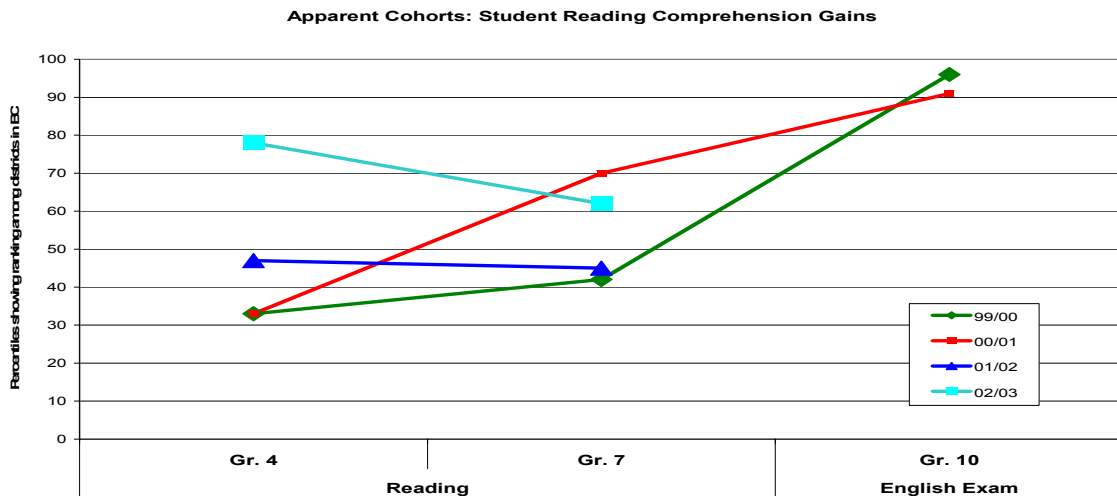
Background

An urgency rang through the city of New Westminster following the release of the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) results in the Fall of 2000, when the local headlines read “New Westminster Bottom Again!” After a full review of research on what makes a difference to learning, we took a systems approach to advancing achievement (Appendix A), and we have maintained that approach for seven years. The methodology that was applied by volunteers in K-12 classrooms throughout the district, over time became known as **SmartReading** and the **SmartLearning** approach. The effects have been stunning and referred to in many, many places. In his November 23, 2007 Report on Education, Deputy Minister Emery Dossall highlighted the district's achievement:

And what about School District No.40 (New Westminster) – check out that district's improvement ...**SmartReading** championed by Susan Close... is credited with making the difference. **SmartLearning** is central to the improvement, but it has been implemented within a district culture that believes that every child can succeed. The district focuses on developing knowledgeable **SmartLearning** teachers through staff and professional learning activities, student teacher placements and hiring practices to provide a consistent approach to improving achievement...it is not just the approach but also the context, consistency of practice and commitment around it...

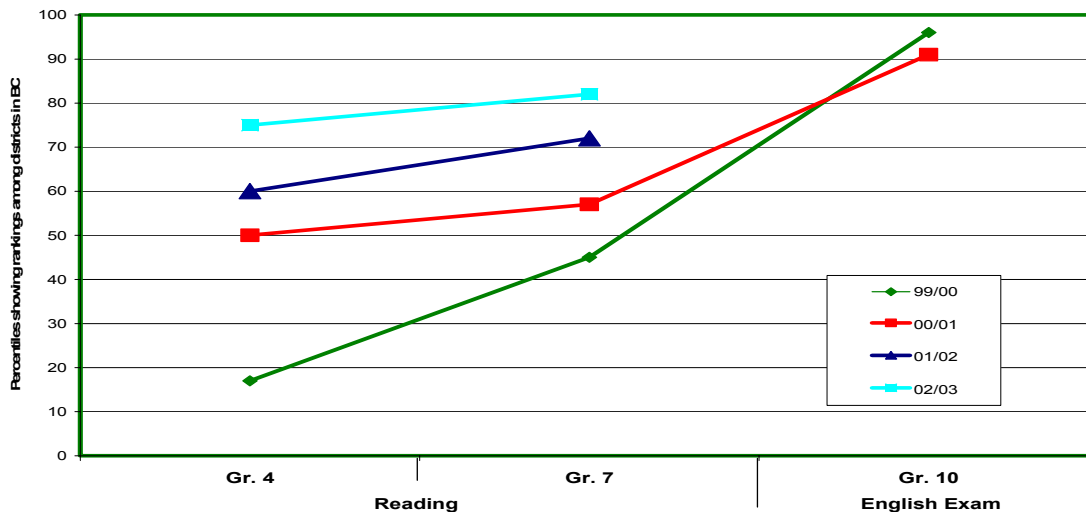
A Rigorous Focus on Achievement over Time

The grade 4 students cited in the 2000 data moved through to grade 7, and on to grade 10 in June of 2007. From the graphs below you can see their achievement growth over time in both reading and writing.



In this graph, it can be seen that students have improved achievement when ranked among other school districts in the province. Grade 4 students have improved dramatically in the last six years. The first two cohorts of students also improved their relative ranking across grades 4, 7 and 10. In the last two years students have declined in their rankings from grade 4 to grade 7. These students will be closely monitored as they approach the grade 10 examination.

Apparent Cohorts: Student Writing Gains



The improvement in our students' literacy skills over the period 2000 to 2007 is remarkable. This achievement is due to the hard work of our students, in learning to read and write at high levels, to our teachers, who have implemented **SmartLearning** and other exemplary literacy practices in their classrooms, and our facilitators and research team members who have worked with teachers to learn what teaching practices best improve their students' literacy.

Forming and sustaining the work of grade-level (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 8-12) district action research teams, committed to implementing and studying the effects of the **SmartLearning** approach on reading and writing achievement, has been the mainstay of the District 40 learning agenda.

Below is an overview of one implementation model that is making a difference to achievement in many districts in the province. Our approach to training is based on staff development research, and is always tailored to meet a district's or a school's specific goals and needs.

SmartLearning Training Teams: in-depth work over time

Districts and individual schools choosing to fully implement the **SmartLearning** approach might invite educators (enrolling and non-enrolling teachers and administrators) to join a **SmartLearning** training team.

A possible focus question might be: How does using **The SmartLearning Approach** to implementing the curriculum affect achievement?

These teams would work together through **three three-four day training cycles a year that include workshops and school-based learning rounds**. Through the experiences teachers will fully implement all of the components in the SmartLearning approach, and as they develop confidence they will begin to co-teach and mentor others interested in the approach. Some may go on to become trainers. Following each training cycle, each teacher will have the option to be coached by a SmartLearning leader via e-mail and/or through telephone conferencing.

Each training cycle would include:

A. Workshop study sessions to learn the basics and the research underpinnings of each aspect in the **SmartLearning** approach:

- Whole class Work: Using assessment data to inform planning and teaching; learning how to use the nine-step SmartLearning Framework and specific SmartThinking Tools to advance **all** learners' skills.
- Independent Work: Applying skills to 'just right' texts.
- Word Work and vocabulary development.

B. School-based Learning Rounds

During the workshop portions of the training, teachers will learn how to plan and sequence sets of skill-specific strategies, strategies planned to lead all learners to richer thinking and greater achievement. A teacher who has volunteered his or her class for the learning round, will present a profile of a class and then the trainer and the participants will work together to plan a **SmartLearning** sequence that will develop identified skills. The trainer and the teacher will be co-teaching the lesson while the other educators (and/or parents) observe the learning in action. Each participant will apply research-based lenses to the learning in the classroom.

Through the classroom-based learning rounds, participants see SmartThinking Tools come to life through the nine-step **SmartLearning** process. The **SmartLearning** trainer models, and where possible, co-teaches the specifics of each strategy while others watch. Following the observation, the teams reflect together, analyzing and assessing the learning. They work together to plan the next day's learning round, with the trainer and the teacher(s) teaching side-by-side.

C. Support Locally, and Coaching From a Distance

Local district-based leaders will need to develop a structure to support and extend classroom applications of the newly learned skills. Sharing and co-planning sessions confirm and deepen practice. A **SmartLearning** trainer or mentor may be accessed to coach the applications from afar via e-mail and/or telephone, on a 1:8 basis.

D. Budget for Three Training Cycles: **SmartLearning** Implementation Teams (Appendix A)

E. A few Reflections from recent **SmartLearning** Training Cycles

I: It was truly a wonderful four days of incredible learning by both the adults and the students in the room. I enjoyed watching not only the faces of the students as they felt “smart”, but also the faces of the teachers as they began to feel “smart” as well. As I think about the power of the model, and I talk to people about how it applies to math, I am overjoyed to see how quickly they make the leap to “**Smart Learning**”. It gives me enormous hope to see the enthusiasm in the teachers as they are eager to return to their classes and begin to share in the learning with their students.

J: The past week was intense and yet very rewarding and inspirational. I feel excited and inspired because I know this whole approach will make a difference in the lives of many children and this is the reason why I teach. I have already implemented some ideas from the sessions today (Monday). I really got the heart and soul of **Smart Learning** and I am excited to integrate this approach and some new ideas... into my own teaching practice. **SmartLearning** will help every student dive deeper into richer learning and critical thinking which is very exciting for me. I learned so much new information that I could be busy planning until the end of June!!

S: I know that all of my students are capable and I need to find ways to lead them to this understanding. I am failing myself and my students if I don't strive to always provide enriching activities for them to increase their brainpower. The research is clear that our brains can and will grow, but it needs to be consistent (over 6 months or more). SmartLearning is a powerful tool to ensure that we give our students the confidence and abilities that will dramatically improve their life chances; it's not just about a lesson or a unit, it transcends this to the big picture – lead a happy, productive life! What a rewarding experience to know that you are providing this opportunity to your students and showing them ways and methods to be better, happier, healthier human beings.

The big idea / capture the essence of this is that it isn't a “*should do*,” it's a “*must do*” for me as a teacher.

SmartLearning Implementation Teams Budget for Three Training Cycles

Below are sample costs associated with trainer fees for implementation cycles. We feel three cycles a year are a minimum requirement to accomplish the training. We see full implementation being accomplished over a two to three-year period. These cycles and costs would be refined to meet the needs of the local district or school. They are meant to be a starting point for planning and discussion. To further the conversation, please contact susan@susanclose.ca. We look forward to working with you to enhance learning and achievement in your district.

First Cycle

Travel day*	Training** workshop	Classroom learning rounds	Classroom learning rounds	Training workshop	Travel day
***Coaching via e-mail and telephone for 6 people over a 6-8 week period (optional).					



Second Cycle

Travel day*	Training** workshop	Classroom learning rounds	Classroom learning rounds	Training workshop	Travel day
***Coaching via e-mail and telephone for 6 people over a 6-8 week period.					



Third Cycle

Travel day*	Training** workshop	Classroom learning rounds	Classroom learning rounds	Training workshop	Travel day
***Coaching via e-mail and telephone for 6 people over a 6-8 week period.					

* Only if travel is necessary during the day. If an evening training session is to be included on a travel day, a half-day rate will be charged for the day.

** Fee for one trainer, larger groups or cross-grade groups may need multiple trainers.

*** (an optional expense)The coach will be a **SmartLearning** trainer or a grade-level specialist.

Note: Travel (transportation, mileage, parking, etc.), accommodation, meals, print materials, have not been included. These costs will also be the responsibility of the host.



SHARED LEADERSHIP BUILDS SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION

- ◆ a systems approach leads a district to dramatic gains in achievement
- ◆ three-year focus on improving writing (2000-2003)
- ◆ four-year further focus on integrating reading and writing (2003-2007)
- ◆ 6172 K-12 students; 471 Aboriginal, 558 special education, 439 teachers

