

New Ideas and Reflections

Day 1 - Reflections

- Amazing how many outcomes this approach develops!
- I am very excited about applying this process. Love the ideas.
- I have learned that questioning techniques are very important.
- I like the “coaching cards” and the extensive areas that can be used to enhance oral language.
- I feel confident to begin teaching the SmartLearning sequence on Tuesday morning. I will go slowly and be sure to set very clear goals.
- Today I noticed I am becoming more confident with the SmartLearning framework and some of the tools. When I started SmartLearning four years ago I often felt overwhelmed. Now I feel inspired and I’m eager to get back to my school district to share some of my new understandings with my colleagues.
- “The more I hear, the more inspired and encouraged I get!” My 'aha!' ...have a balance between left and right brain activities.
- I noticed I know more about SmartLearning processes than I thought, and my confidence had been boosted. Thanks!
- I am feeling overwhelmed but encouraged. Overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information, strategies and tools. Encouraged by how simply this can be implemented.
- I noticed that I’m not the only one struggling with assessment for reading.
- I felt focussed and comfortable participating in these lessons. This is how I want my kids to be.
- Tammy and Megan – enthusiastic presenters – lots of information – in a short amount of time. Both interesting and relevant.
- When I was working in groups of 3, I felt safe, secure, and confident because I knew I was going in the “right” direction and my group members helped to add to my understanding.
- I noticed that there is a natural flow to the strategies that puts the emphasis on the learning and the learner; a student cannot be a passive learner in a SmartLearning classroom because of the responsibility to classmates, the intrinsic interest, and the solvable challenges.
- I wonder does this work as well for introverts? How can the tools work for quieter folks...I guess perhaps it gives them more comfort and feeling of preparedness before they have to share with others.
- Movement was more important than I thought – something which is difficult for me personally but really useful to engage my students. Loved the Hamlet example. How do I help students think in analogies?
- I’ve learned that this process will take time to develop. I’ve learned that what I’m doing with SmartLearning is good and that I can go so much farther with them all. I now realize that I need to understand and be more aware of when students’ brains are unbalanced and they need a change.
- I am so inspired and excited to implement a SmartLearning sequence. I am thinking about ways I can get the tools and strategies to work with my class. I wonder if there exists a list of recommended picture books for each reading skill (inference/connect/etc).
- I learned how important it is to use “tools or thinking strategies” that balance left and right brain processing
- I noticed how SmartLearning is directly connected to the Language Arts IRPs and doing these activities would get students talking.

- SmartLearning encompasses all aspects of the new English Language IRPs. I'm using it for oral language! What a bonus to have performance scales to go with the outcomes. THANK YOU Ann Nottingham.
- Excellent details that flesh out big ideas and give me pictures of what I will do next term.
- I now recognizing the power of partner-talk.
- SmartLearning Sequence level one, grade 8-12 – Megan and Tammy – Thank you! I love your energy Megan! For us newbies – it would help to have a clearer understanding of the concepts before experiencing a sequence. Making connections would be easier... this seminar was a little pushed for time and sometimes steps weren't clearly demonstrated.
- I learned to start slowly and work as a whole class.
- Great tools, but at times the pacing felt a little slow. I would like a faster pace.
- Connection/reflection – kids do enjoy the games – movement – social interaction. They **will** learn words better if they are taught well initially.
- This is great! I love that the kids will be thinking with and about the subject matter.
- I was very pleased to learn how easy and how low prep some tools are, **and** how effective they can be.
- Tammy and Megan – what an extraordinary morning. As an educator I am always pleased when I attend a conference where what I learn today can be used in my classroom tomorrow. I am excited about my upcoming week.
- Some ideas presented reinforced what I have tried already.
- So good to give myself the permission to **slow down** and really teach the routines of independent word work learning before jumping into it all. Step back... Breathe...
- Just fantastic!
- Just what I needed to take my practice to a new level. Can't wait until tomorrow.

New Ideas and Reflections

Day 2 – Reflections

- *The SmartLearning tools I've learned about, particularly the A/B partner-talk, lend themselves beautifully to differentiating the learning 😊.*
- *I realize that a book or text can be taught any number of ways depending on the skill focus. I would like a set of tasks to go with each important skill.*
- *I liked the reference to criteria being a recipe for success. I also appreciated the reference to powerful speakers, listeners and thinkers.*
- I really enjoyed my conference. SmartLearning is brand new to me; I want more!
- *Ready and willing to use the new SmartLearning charts and the coaching cards with my students.*
- *I realize that a book can be taught any number of ways depending on the skill focus. I would like a set of tasks to go with each important skill.*
- *I can now see how I could start to implement SmartLearning in my classroom.*

- *I can see how SmartLearning can promote both receptive and expressive language usage by helping students develop both their spoken and written language through the use of the SmartLearning coaching cards.*
- *I need to purposefully consider activating both sides of the brain when I am planning... specific teaching about thinking in visual images and thinking with language.*
- *Love the connections created with graphically representing the understandings of Social Studies, especially given the pervasiveness of government in the curriculum. Thanks!*
- *I realize that a book can be taught any number of ways depending on the skill focus. I would like a set of tasks to go with each important skill.*
- *Very good session. I enjoyed the many ideas I will be able to use right away with my students.*
- *Thanks for the materials. I enjoyed how we all got writing after the preparation. All of us were eager writers.*
- *Good to reflect on the value of repeated use of the same or similar tools to get at the big idea. I like how Robin and Kelly identified criteria for each step of the process: connect, process, transform and reflect.*
- *Going through the lesson plans was very helpful to see and feel what the strategies are like. Great – Thank you!*
- *The importance of the Words Their Way program in teaching teachers the process for differentiating instruction while varying content. This can be transferred to other content areas.*
- *Very practical ideas that I will be able to use right away, and with any subject area. Easily transferrable to French Immersion, ESL, EAL etc.*
- *I had “Go slowly, but surely” totally reinforced.*
- *I learned how I can use the SmartLearning process and tools in my learning assistance and ESL groups.*
- *It is okay to take more time for reflection, practise, refinement – SLOW DOWN – simplify: expectations, number of groups.*
- *I love all of the different activities that I learned from Erika re: Activating Prior Knowledge and imaging with many details. I will use these right away.*
- *I can get a lot deeper into the text, and get much more powerful thinking happening when I spread SmartLearning over several days!*
- *I have learned that I need to take more time when working through a book with students.*
- *The value and uses of A/B partnerships and the value of reflecting was reinforced for me. I learned to slow down the process of teaching the reading strategies. Assess the growth from before and after...*

- *Teaching the students to be aware of the how the brain works seems vital. The new tools will really help me to do this.*
- The SmartReading assessment feels as wishy-washy as many other assessments. Reflection: the strength of the SmartReading assessment is in the student self assessment on the following day. The ability to add new ideas during a conference with the teacher and the teacher's coaching feedback would be particularly helpful for the low-end students.
- The studies on the brain fascinate me and make me realize what I have been trying to practice all along is going in the right direction!!
- Thanks for the overview of the set of SmartThinking tools. I am looking forward to using them. (30 variations on this reflection)
- The SmartLearning Round structure sounds great. We will try it in our district.
- I learned the value of A/B partner-talk, slowing the lessons down and the value of looking at a book/story/text of any kind in depth.
- The silent hand signals that Erika showed us this morning will make a huge difference with my grade one class.
- I wonder how long I'll really be able to drag out the sharing of a book before the students mutiny?
- I would have really appreciated more time to delve into the reading assessment process (and writing too?!)
- I love how SmartLearning gives the responsibility and 'power' to the student. They **own** it!
- *I was talking with a grade two teacher and we decided it would be a good idea to make "My storybook about thinking" – each book could last 2-3 months and would be a compilation of the students' thinking about their thinking, what they know about their own brainwork and their learning. This would be good motivation for us to ensure the students have the vocabulary needed for their stories. Those stories could be read to themselves, to their friends, to... They could review their thinking stories and do an entry summarizing their thinking about their thinking using a frame like, "In the fall I thought... and now I think."*

Imagine what that would look like at graduation if we had them do this kind of reflective thinking along the way, after each year. I did something like this with Beijing grad students who would laugh and laugh when they looked at their thinking across a year.

- *I have spent a lot of time focusing on left-directed/left-brained learning. It is now time for a more 'balanced' approach in my teaching.*
- *The new coaching cards tied to right and left brain activities were a new idea for me.*
- *All students can feel competency in drawing if led into the process. I can see how valuable visual thinking activities can be for developing conceptual understanding. Thank you Jill Doyle for this insight. (ten variations on this reflection)*
- *I noticed that my school has a long way to go with reading assessment above grade nine.*

- *My two introductory sessions demonstrated to me how well SmartLearning fits in with AFL – which our district has been really focusing on.*
- *I love all the new ideas but I especially appreciate the connections I have made to what I already know and do. I can't wait to incorporate these skills into my classroom. My students (and I-I guess) have had a rough start to journaling and I can't wait to try some of these new ideas.*
- *I will focus on integrating visual thinking into the curriculum.*
- *The partner questioning at the first step of independent reading and how the questions PUSH the partner to think more deeply. I like how this process spins stories from predictions in students' minds.*
- *I am excited to create and implement a sequence and possibly use it as a cross-grade resource. I am reassured about using the time it takes to implement this approach as I see the end result 'selling' it to parents.*
- *I knew that movement helped children learn. I didn't know however the extent that movement does help. I will be getting my students to walk and talk more often as well as any other movements I can integrate into the day.*
- *I like the idea of slowing down and allowing time for good teaching, modeling and practice before the final assessment.*
- *Simple tasks with a slower pace allow one (teacher and students) time to take an experience to a higher level.*
- *"Better to measure the right things somewhat imprecisely than to measure the useless with infinite precision." Reinforces "Mark smarter, not harder."*
- *I need to rework my daybook to reflect the uses of before, during and after tool-use/activities to keep my teaching focused.*
- *The brain is powerful and yet contains much untapped potential and it is the responsibility of the teacher to help each student access all of its potential.*
- *The imagery piece is critically important to the SmartLearning process.*
- *So many ideas and concepts! They are not necessarily new, but I need more time to think, talk and reflect about how I will implement these ideas. Maybe the last session every day should be a time for reflection.*
- *The tools are so useful for different ways to engage the students. I will be using all of the same strategies!*
- *"Say what you need to say..." There are so many ideas going on in my mind and when I am talking with my partner, or engaging in an activity, I feel more successful when I share all ideas and don't hold back!*
- *I am going to work on structured A/B talk with my students and set a visual set of criteria to guide the interactions. I look forward to putting this into action.*

- *Balance time and increase learning. Challenge in secondary classes – cover curriculum and knowledge with higher levels of thinking.*
- *We often use the left brain processing in teaching older students when they equally need the right brain processing. In primary we do focus on right brain activities and maybe we need to use more left brain processing.*
- *I am thinking about how I will use the great new SmartLearning poster resource in my classroom.*
- *A new idea...being able to use partner talk in furthering learning helps in expanding perspectives.*
- *The next phase will need some restraint so as to not to try too much and overwhelm self.*
- *This brings more purpose and excitement to teaching.*
- *This approach requires higher levels of thinking from the teacher.*
- *I use more than I thought I did. I have come a long way since the learning rounds last spring.*
- *It seems overwhelming to imagine my grade ones producing the type/quality of work that is shown.*
- *The power of brain research to inform practice across disciplines and areas of the school was especially significant to me as an administrator.*
- *It seems to me that an infusion of SmartLearning into the work of an administrator is a natural extension of the work we are doing.*
- *Using the Sort and Predict tool, discussing the research and reasons for using it and the variety of differentiation that can be used with this tool made many connections for me. Thank you Robin Speed and Kelly Ranford.*
- *Seeing an example of Patricia Pain's planning pages for Independent SmartLearning gave me ideas of how to focus and describe the elements of a lesson. Thank you, Patricia.*
- *This focus on the learning process reflects much better what our students will need in this modern society.*
- *The power of learning involves motivating the students to **balance** his or her learning by using equally the left and right sides of his or her brain... to think in different ways.*
- *Thank you for helping me put the pieces together. Connecting to the research helps me with the WHY. Also, statements that I had connections with: "...people attend more when their name is spoken... If they talk in sentences, they will write in sentences." Thank you. Susan.*
- *Good work! I need more time.*
- *Rehearsal frames are very valuable in a high stress situation. I felt calmed by the knowledge that I could use the frame in my response.*
- *I need to introduce ideas with students questioning and should continue through my topic or unit.*

- *We need to know where we are going in order to get there! ☺*
- *Some useful tools to take home and practise in my classroom.*
- *If student feel unprepared, they should say. "I need more rehearsal time." This is something I will use when I am asking additional probing questions.*
- *Using objects in class in discovery-based learning activities allows students to utilize both sides of their brains and take intellectual risks towards the ultimate goal of students taking ownership of their learning. THANKS!*
- *The new coaching cards are very interesting and a great idea to teach what each side of the brain is doing. Great job!*
- *Found a rubric I can use!!!*
- *I enjoyed the concept behind imagery and questioning. I have a grade four class that has difficulty thinking outside the question-answer comprehension sheet. I plan to use it in a very simple manner for a novel study to get them thinking about asking questions!*
- *I will need to maintain some restraint in order not to do too much too soon – to be as effective as possible.*
- *My perspective has been broadened.*
- *My goal for today is to find 2-3 things I can implement easily to start! However, it is difficult to not want to **jump** in... I will take my time but I am quite excited (actually incredibly excited)!*
- *It's been good connecting my new ideas to what I already practise, e.g. Students don't state their categories when they tell their sorts; they have others guess the categories. I've learned some new things, e.g. How the SmartLearning round works. We are hoping to implement learning rounds in my school. I noticed that it was easier for me at this conference as I have been practising SmartLearning for 4-5 years, and everything I heard I could straight away connect it to something to do. My goal this week is to discuss what I learned with my students and then on Thursday evening we will share our experiences with our colleagues. Fantastic!!*
- *I'm happy to discover that the directions I, my department, and my school are taking 'fit' so well with the research I have explored today.*
- *I have done some work with Words their Way but after this session realize that I am just touching the surface and need to do so much more!*
- *The ideas of 'paper sculpture' for learning about the layers of government showed me that visual thinking can be used for any subject area... represent a character in a novel...*
- *As we moved to new learning we need to revisit basics often and connect with 'why that is important.'*
- *The third session on the first day was too much, not the content – just the timing. I needed a shorter day, and time to reflect with others.*

- *There is a void in not providing assessment concepts for reporting as part of the session for people new to SmartLearning – ‘first time users of the approach.*
- *Visual learning is an excellent way to transform your thinking, even if you are not an artist.*
- *I am looking forward to using the tools/strategies I learned over the two days of the conference.*
- *Glad to be a part of another SmartLearning Conference. The more I learn the better!*
- *I’ve been to a SmartLearning seminar before but this definitely had more information than I had seen previously.*
- *I am not tired and we worked together for a very long time. I am invigorated!*
- *I am **not tired!***
- *I like the ideas. It seems a little overwhelming right now. It would be great to have a list of books/resources and tasks to go along with each book.*
- *I realized that I need to engage my students in task analysis - the thinking and the reviewing of the end-task and, I need to make them aware of the steps that need to be taken.*
- *I wish I had known about visual imagery long ago; I remember so many lessons where I was even bored with the content. This is an excellent way of understanding and representing knowledge.*
- *I was able to take away more ideas of how to incorporate more non-fiction pieces into my SmartLearning lessons.*
- *I liked how Erika did imagery with a non-fiction text.*
- *It is amazing to see how many outcomes the SmartLearning process develops. I cannot wait to go through the SmartLearning process with my students.*
- *The benefits of going deeper through practice and repetition, is extremely valuable, and necessary.*
- *I like the ‘chunking’ the story idea. Processing the story in smaller parts equals deeper understanding.*
- *The process will help me sort out the IRPs. Oh! And my head is spinning!*
- *WordWork with Patricia Pain... amazing organization!*
- *I learned some practical strategies that I can implement in my classroom immediately. These tools will help my students learn how to make inferences and make planning less onerous for me.*
- *The power of learning is to activate both sides of the brain to create balance and harmony – to assure successful learning for all.*