

Reflections from the Leadership Institute for Smarter Learning September 13, 2008

On September 13, 2008 fifty educators participated in our first *SmartLearning* leadership institute of the year. The institute was designed for people offering *SmartLearning* workshops in their schools and districts, and for people planning to lead or co-lead learning rounds that showcase the *SmartLearning* approach. During the institute participants polished their understandings about the brain and learning. They also learned from current research findings and from each other's experiences. As they prepared to apply the understandings to their leadership work with *SmartLearning*, they responded to three questions.

What support do you need to accomplish your goals?

Explain the solid support you need to keep your focus and help you realize great accomplishment in the coming year.

Ongoing dialogue

- An ongoing dialogue with colleagues to develop and refine skills, particularly since leadership is new to me
- Opportunities to connect with the leaders in the room
- Access to the *SmartLearning* community, new ideas and learning (e.g. new developments on the website)
- Collaboration/planning time with other *SmartLearning* teachers
- I need to connect periodically with other leaders from this group
- I am looking forward to input from other practicing *SmartLearning* teachers (action research group?).
- I would like to re-establish a connection not only with the people in my district, but also with the *SmartLearning* "family."
- Getting together with other *SmartLearning* teachers, sharing successes and discussing challenges is really important.
- On-going dialogue with others in the leadership Institute
- On-going dialogue with other teachers trying to enhance their work
- Continued opportunities to meet, share, gain and create ideas
- Continue to have these training sessions and conferences. This was extremely helpful.
- On-going training days for rich conversation and validation
- Continued support through valuable days like today. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!
- Continued conferences. These one day events are great, exciting and rejuvenating.
- Continued leadership one day conferences to share ideas and keep up to date with the latest research
- Regular, monthly professional dialogue meetings
- Regular meetings with own learning team
- Sharing success meetings
- Sharing idea meetings

Team planning/administrative support

- A team to discuss, develop and plan with
- I really feel the need for a team. I would love to have a network of committed French teachers to work with co-planning, co-teaching, and debriefing.
- I need to build a team in my district and get the recognition from our administration that this is an important piece of achieving our literacy goals.
- District team to build short and long range plans
- Administrative support

Learning round support

- Learning rounds make so much sense
- Help setting up learning rounds
- Learning rounds at a district or even school level
- More side-by-side work
- I believe that having the opportunity to lead a learning round with an experienced facilitator is my next step. By working with the support of another facilitator I will be able to solidify the learning that has occurred for me today.

Coaching support

- Mentor trainers – possibly scaffolding new leaders with a more experienced trainer, to start co-presenting workshops and learning rounds together.

- I need some side-by-side facilitation! I would love to work together with another facilitator to plan, facilitate and debrief learning rounds and workshops.
- Stretch to a model in our district that embraces instructional coaches in literacy and math, and systems to ensure everyone stays current with the *SmartLearning* research-based practices
- Support over-time with the training of teachers and a gradual release of responsibility

(Support needed to help us be successful this year... continued)

Research updates/resources

- I so appreciate the current research update.
- The research component; teachers and administrators want to know the 'why' of learning
- Continuous information/research to implement in classrooms
- Updates on the 9 step *SmartLearning* framework and Reading Assessment Record (RAR)
- Stay in touch with the literature
- Reading list would be great
- I need to have a reading list to stay current on research.
- resources (grade one)
- Continued district funding and support to keep the wheels rolling.
- I am looking forward to reviewing the research update from the PowerPoint being sent out.
- I must have the new book: *Motivating minds: a framework and tools for smarter learning*

Support with assessment

- Continued support around the assessment piece
- I need a *SmartReading* assessment workshop, and review for secondary
- Site license from New Westminster for my school

Website support

- Ideas on the website about how to support newcomers to *SmartLearning* after a workshop, a learning round or training session
- A blog or similar communication for questions with those most experienced. Connecting would be great!

Tool kits

- Tool kit series that showcase the *SmartThinking* tools
- Revisit tool kits, not just for new teachers, but with revisions and updates for all

Working deeper

- Continue working to a deeper level

Influencing change

- Strategies on how to influence new thinking in a school where *SmartLearning* is not on everyone's lips

What kind of support would best suits you, and why?

Please explain the kind of support that best suits you.

Ongoing leadership training

- Continued leadership training
- Leadership days
- More days like this with time to plan and then a conference. Call/BLOG for further discussion.
- Possibly ½ day or full day session midyear or at the November conference
- Annual teacher training meeting to share ongoing learning
- A chat/forum to connect with other *SmartLearning* experts
- A combination of reading lists and sharing with colleagues
- Continue to keep us all in the loop.
- Regular, monthly professional dialogue meetings
- Meetings to share ideas and successes

Coaching support

- Side-by-side leading with experts because they have seen it all and will know how to adjust the *SmartLearning* process and the tools to any situation
- A co-presenter/mentor to work with
- A mentor

Team planning/learning round support

- Time for planning and collaboration at my workplace
- Learning rounds
- Support people to do learning rounds (in my school... and at the district level)
- Learning rounds. Time to discuss successes and challenges, and time to co-teach, co-plan, connect and reflect.
- Co-planning, watching what others are doing, debriefing after I have tried something
- Support on site, in classrooms for a set amount of time, with a team
- A team to work with, in-time coaching, and the ability to email for advice. The website is great.
- My local team – regular meetings and debriefing, ability to email. Thank you for the website.
- A team for support so that I can debrief
- I really enjoyed the implementation stories showcasing what is working from different perspectives... from a district-wide focus on improving the learning of vulnerable students, to a workshop to meet the needs of leaders working to fully implement the *SmartLearning* approach, and to staff developer's experience building a school culture around *SmartLearning*.
- Going into learning rounds this year I will use the outlines for learning rounds and make adaptations to make it fit my district's needs

Facilitation/workshop presentation support

- Teams – presenting and sharing ideas
- Working with a team of facilitators to plan and debrief, to facilitate learning rounds
- A clear understanding of the purpose and audience for November's conference. Help in planning the upcoming workshop. Feedback on planning.

Tool kits

- Tool kits (not just for new teachers but with revisions and updates for all) – after school and on district and provincial professional development days

Resources

- Materials and handouts

Directory

- Participant directory as a way to connect after an event and carry on conversations

Workshops

- Workshops with student samples

Communication with technology

- The website – quick and easy, can be used at my convenience. Please keep it updated. It makes me feel connected. Contacts.
- Increased opportunities for sharing and dialogue with decreasing budgets and ability to leave districts (leaders' conference calls, posts or blogs, webcasting)

Data collection

- As a district, how do we start the data collection so that we can actually see the progress over time?

Unsure

- Not 100% sure. Implementation remains somewhat fragile and we are still in a "situation-reaction" mode. Support needed is usually on a similar needs basis.

What are your reflections on the day?

Please reflect on today.

- Connecting with educators with like passions has given me an injection of energy and hope. The possibility of creating a learning round has become real. The quote that ...“Every class is a miracle!” will become a quote on my next week at a glance!
- The teacher gets the *first* and *last* word in a learning round.
- I totally needed this! Now I need more.
- Awesome! I learned so much!!
- Today just flew by. I was not ready for lunch, nor was I ready for the end of the day. What worked? Models for workshops and learning rounds and the discussion of the ‘givens’. I found numerous quotes that spoke to me and seemed to capture many of my own thoughts. I hope to hold onto these as guidance.
- It is crucial to establish the classroom community before anything else.
- The opportunity to listen to so many new ideas is exhilarating! Working on the “givens” and the “framework” helped to solidify my own thinking.
- Excellent! New ideas! New people!
- My new learning was about imaging my own learning.
- Another wonderful day. I learn something new every time. It is great to know that there is support as close as an email.
- The presentations, especially this morning, were wonderful. You motivate me to review the research. Thank you!
- Excellent! I always learn so much and feel so great about having decided to plunge into *SmartLearning* full-tilt five years ago.
- Fantastic learning opportunities. It is so wonderful hearing the successes and struggles of others, celebrating our strengths and working to encourage others.
- This has been an extraordinary day. I am so fortunate and honoured to be here. My practice and presentations will be much more developed. Thank you to the leaders for the day.
- How exciting to be here and to meet friends... Taking a page from a principal-leader’s book, ‘I would love to play in classrooms side-by-side with teachers implementing the approach.’
- Wonderful connections. Ah Ha! Learning Round teacher gets first and last word!
- Sharing stories, in addition to structured partner-talk, amongst participants is something that I need to encourage in my students because I recognize how empowering it is to tell stories.
- I feel energized. My curiosity is piqued. I’m interested in the new website and hope that books and research referenced today are displayed on the website.
- There is no professional development that is as valuable as talking to and listening to engaged and brilliant colleagues. I have learned that I know and do more than I thought that I did.
- As always, stimulating and full of new ideas ... a “boost” to continue the adventures. Every time I attend these gatherings I learn from these incredibly *SmartTeachers*, who are passionate about best practices for their students. Thanks for the opportunity!
- Really good to hear other districts are walking similar paths to us... with challenges and successes. Really appreciated the opportunity to hear and have my voice heard.
- Thank you! This day substantiated so much of what I’ve heard, and frame-worked so much of what I’ve seen. The day just flew!
- So great to be back as part of the “family” and to feel the positive energy. Being both confirmed and extended in my thinking about *SmartLearning* made for such a great day. I really enjoyed the initial brain-based research piece.
- Wonderful... a long day that didn’t feel like one! Thank you.
- I really enjoyed hearing what everyone from different districts is doing with the implementation of *SmartLearning*.
- Loved the time spent on the “givens.” Our experience is not unique and we all have similar foundations for providing professional development. I feel so fortunate to be included with this amazing, passionate, collegial group of people. Wow!
- Great day! It was great to meet with all these team leaders. I am so happy that I took the time to come down here.
- I am still struggling with how to help my teachers learn the research underpinnings. I can’t wait to do learning rounds. Perhaps I can go to a school and take part in a learning round. I really liked the teacher having the first word and the last word during a learning round.
- Always goes too fast. So great to connect with like-minded people.
- Thank you, it feels so great to re-connect with so many familiar faces.
- Good conversation. I liked the integrated brain focus and the idea of beginning and returning to the image, right-directed thinking.
- Refreshing, imaging, extended learning, helped to identify next steps.
- A wonderful, thoughtful day of reflection and new ideas – again. We hate having to leave...