

Todd Rogers Research Award

The Todd Rogers Research award is given by the Canadian Educational Researchers' Association to an individual in recognition of his/her achievements and contributions in providing leadership in the field of evidence based research.

During the year for which the award is granted, the nominees must have been in the employ of a school board in the province in which the CSSE conference is held.

The winner must have demonstrated a sustained commitment to:

1. Facilitating the building of formal research/investigative networks to support a culture of evidence informed student achievement improvement.
2. Providing direct leadership and support to educators to enhance evidence informed research and knowledge mobilization-based professionalism in schools and classrooms.

CERA Awards

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Todd Rogers Research Award, 2008: recipient Susan Close

Susan has a history of outstanding accomplishment as a classroom teacher and teacher educator, a history that extends more than thirty years. In 1970 she was awarded a Hilroy Award for Innovative Teaching by the Canadian Teachers Federation for her work at Genelle Elementary School in Trail School District. She co-lead the three-year multi-district *Learning for Success* Research Project with SFU Professor Emeritus, Dr. Milton McClaren (1999-2002), and she presented findings from the study in a keynote address at the July, 2001 UKRA conference in Canterbury. Susan also headed a team who presented the preliminary findings from the first year of the study at the July 2000 UKRA conference in Oxford, England. She has coauthored five books, a video series, and many articles on innovative ways to develop and assess higher-order literacy skills. Susan recently coauthored a chapter for a UKRA book featuring ways to enhance student writing. The book chapter presents systematic ways to develop all students into powerful thinkers, readers and writers. The books published by Susan and her co-workers have been widely used by teachers who find them highly practical in approach and yet firmly based on sound research. Many university-level teacher educators sometimes despair of the gulf that seems apparent between so called theory and practice. If anyone has demonstrated that this gulf can and must be bridged, that person is Susan Close. Susan and the SD No. 40 Learning Services team are currently co-leading a two-year graduate Diploma course, *SmartLearning: reading and writing in today's classroom*, with a Field Services team from Simon Fraser University. Two initiatives, with significant leadership from Susan, are representative of her effort to develop a systematic approach to fostering student literacy and changing educational practices: *Learning for Success* and its more recent incarnation, *SmartReading*. Both of these initiatives were based on Susan's extensive experience and on her ability to scan and synthesize foundational research and apply it to practical teaching methodologies. *SmartReading* is a nine step research-based process for enhancing both reading and writing achievement. Over the 2002-2004 school years, members of the district research team systematically and explicitly implemented components of the *SmartReading* model. Findings from the research are revealing

dramatic gains in both reading and writing, K-12. District and school-based facilitators, and educators through grade group interactions, have worked to refine the methodology. Assessment tools based on performance standards set for students of similar ages have been developed to gather individual and grade level achievement data at the classroom, school, and district levels. The key point to be made about SmartReading is that it is a systematic, long term program rather than a one-shot, quick fix method of the sort that has plagued educational change initiatives for many years. The school districts 05, 08, 20, 23, 57, 61, 70, 79, and 82 all reference SmartReading in their Network of Performance Based Schools projects. She has established Research Teams in SD50 Haida Gwaii, Northwest Territories, the Kootenays, Fort St. John and Chilliwak to list a few. If there is one attribute that most fully describes Susan's work as an educator it is collaboration. While Susan is clearly a leader in the field, her approach to leadership is one that enables the work and success of others: teachers, students, principals, parents. She accomplishes this by constantly networking with colleagues throughout the system, by supporting and mentoring them in their work, and celebrating their accomplishments wherever possible. Truly effective leadership doesn't foster dependence, but develops capacity in organizations and individuals. In the field of literacy Susan Close is an outstanding example of this concept.

Michael Strukoff
Grand Forks, B.C.

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