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MEDIA RELEASE

Surrey Schools' e-portfolio education wins SFU prize

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Photos: <http://at.sfu.ca/KEEKrz>

Video: Making Learning Visible in Surrey Schools <http://at.sfu.ca/ZjRGNo>

Simon Fraser University's Cmolik Prize judges name Surrey School District as prize's inaugural winner for innovative use of digital portfolio in education

The success of a new way of assessing and advancing student learning has scored an A+ from a nine-person-selection team tasked with awarding the first **Cmolik Prize for Enhancement of Public Education in British Columbia**.

The Simon Fraser University **Faculty of Education** award, worth \$50,000, goes to the Surrey School District (Surrey Schools), for its innovation and success in implementation of a new approach to student assessment.

The innovative assessment methodology helps students become immersed in learning and improving, and it engages their parents and teachers in monitoring and supporting student progress in real-time through digital or e-portfolios.

"As a student's learning presents itself a teacher captures it through photos, video and notation toward populating a student's e-portfolio," explains Robyn Thiessen, a Green Timbers Elementary teacher.

Thiessen is one of the winning entry's co-authors and among eight Surrey educators who began exploring the potential of digital portfolios to communicate student learning using the online tool **FreshGrade** three years ago. "FreshGrade's compilation of information is shared with parents who review it with their children. The goal is to engage and empower both while extending learning and support beyond the classroom."

In its third year of use and implemented in several kindergarten to Grade 9 classes at 35 Surrey district schools, the online reporting project is credited with improving students' ownership of their learning. Internal demand for the program is outstripping the district's ability to implement it, as teachers shelve the use of traditional report cards. In fact, the district is fielding inquiries and requests from educators across North America. They want to know more about the Surrey School District's program.

"The use of a digital portfolio fosters student engagement in learning by allowing students to choose evidence and artifacts that illustrate their personal growth. Students then create actions plans to improve their growth," explains Thiessen.

"Using a tool that provides a 24/7 digital window into learning is a profound way to impact student learning and achievement and prepare them for success in the 21st century."

In announcing this award's recipient, SFU Faculty Dean of Education Kris Magnusson says: "There is little doubt that our K-12 educational system is in a time of profound change. As information becomes ubiquitous and learning diffuse, traditional

methods of documenting achievement are becoming less and less relevant. That is why the inaugural winner of the prestigious Cmolik prize is so exciting.”

The Surrey Schools entry—Surrey Schools: Making Learning Visible: A 360° Transformation—was one of 28 original entries and among three **shortlisted** for this prize.

The entry’s co-authors were Robyn Thiessen, Green Timbers Elementary Grade 3 teacher; Jordan Tinney, superintendent of schools; Elisa Carlson, director of instruction, education services; Dan Turner, director, information management services and Antonio Vendramin, principal, Cambridge Elementary.

Funding from Russ and Ellen Cmolik, who are passionate about education and have been inspired by school tours globally, led to this award’s creation. The two are not involved in the selection of prize recipients.

As Canada's engaged university, SFU is defined by its dynamic integration of innovative education, cutting-edge research and far-reaching community engagement. SFU was founded almost 50 years ago with a mission to be a different kind of university—to bring an interdisciplinary approach to learning, embrace bold initiatives, and engage with communities near and far. Today, SFU is a leader amongst Canada's comprehensive research universities and is ranked one of the top universities in the world under 50 years of age. With campuses in British Columbia's three largest cities—Vancouver, Surrey and Burnaby—SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 30,000 students, and boasts more than 130,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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