

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Initiative (Canada) in British Columbia**

John Abbott is no stranger to Canada, having presented across the country and in British Columbia numerous times over the past decade. The research synthesis of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Initiative on approaches to learning will be familiar to many members of the BCSSA who will have heard John Abbott speak in 2005.

In September, 2005 the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) launched the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Initiative (Canada) in collaboration with the UK Initiative to promote dialogue and deliberation on the current education systems and institutions in Canada.

Since the launch of this initiative, John Abbott has provided keynote addresses, led workshops, and participated in planning sessions across Canada. These include presentations at two Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) events, a keynote presentation at the National Learning Summit on Middle Childhood, and 2-3 day workshops and various presentations in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

In May 2007, CCL co-hosted a student conference with 10 school districts that have worked with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Initiative (Canada) in British Columbia and the Ministry of Education. Sixty students from the 10 school districts came together with school and district staff to network and explore next steps. The aim of the conference was to develop a cadre of senior high school students who would develop within BC a network with an enthusiasm for a form of educational transformation that would empower students, staff, parents and community leaders to shape a future which is personally satisfying and fulfilling for everybody, while being ecologically, economically and politically sustainable.

Below are excerpts of statements from school districts in British Columbia that demonstrate some of the impact of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Initiative.

### School District 60: Peace River North

*John Abbott has inspired a district initiative that we refer to as “Today and Tomorrow”. We have involved stakeholder groups in “World Café” discussions about how to partner with parents and the community to create John’s “Three Legged Stool”. We are currently exploring strategies to enhance relationships and community in our schools, to engage our students in dual credit “cognitive apprenticeships” (the health sciences, teaching etc.) and to develop a true learning and caring community in Fort St. John.*

*John’s encouragement has inspired us to make Social Responsibility our district’s number one goal. We want our kids to become the best FOR the world, not simply the best IN the world. We took it to heart when John told us that our community was a perfect place to start a mind-shift about everything from education to the future of our planet.*

### School District 64: Gulf Islands

*We are embarking on a path much less-travelled, but one that promises somewhat of a quantum leap as opposed to a statistically insignificant incremental improvement.*

*That path is one that we have already been on, to some degree, but not with both feet and not all the time. A visit from John Abbott helped us recognize, in an “appreciative inquiry” sort of way, that our success owes much to some of our current practices that fit on this path, and that we are in a position to take it to the next level if we choose to fully embrace those practices we now dabble in. In short, we have chosen to do just that.*

*The enhancements involve truly embracing practices that we all agree are the best, but which we have not pursued beyond the point that would require us to ask for help or to change some well-worn habits. Constructivism, cognitive apprenticeship, situated learning, intergenerational learning, blurred lines between school and community, student-led outcomes, authentic assessment and reporting, research-based student groupings and re-establishing significant roles for school, home, and community are among these practices.*

### School District 54: Bulkley Valley

*A group of 6 students plan to lead an extensive series of community sessions that will begin with John Abbott’s return in November 2007. At these gatherings we will look at the current situation in the Valley using John’s ideas as lenses. We will ask each group to answer 3 fundamental questions: “What should be the vision statement for learning for this community”; “What could your organization do to help the educational community achieve this?”; and “What could you do within your organization to further such objectives amongst young people when they are not in school?” The collated answers to these questions will be reflected back to the community and we hope they will form the basis of a new relationship between education providers and the community.*

*In the Bulkley Valley, we have the dream of creating a sustainable future for ourselves. This is a daunting but very attainable goal.*

### School District 37: Delta

*The Focus Group Initiative is a program that is offered to students (at North Delta Secondary) who wish to “learn how to learn.”*

*The Initiative is offered in the regular school calendar. Students meet during regular blocks and when the year is finished they will have earned credits for any two of the following four subjects: Socials 11, Law 12, Earth Science 11, and Physics 11. In the Focus Group Initiative, students become members of a module where they learn within what John Abbott describes as the “apprenticeship model”. Students are largely responsible for their own learning in these curricular areas, with much support and direction from the teachers involved to ensure that the curriculum is covered. This Initiative introduces a fundamental change in the way students are taught and is more in keeping with the research that points to how students best learn.*

For more information on these initiatives in B.C. and others, please visit [www.ccl-cca.ca/21stcenturylearning](http://www.ccl-cca.ca/21stcenturylearning) or contact your colleagues.