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MEDIA RELEASE

\$50,000 Cmolik Prize awarded for education innovation

Kieran Egan to use funds for developing Imaginative Education Research Group

April 06, 2016

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SFU has awarded \$50,000 to an educator whose “imaginative education” initiatives benefit students and teachers throughout the world, and particularly in B.C.

Kieran Egan is the winner of the second annual Cmolik Prize for the Enhancement of Public Education in B.C. The prize recognizes recipients who have developed and implemented an invention, innovation, concept, process or procedure that enhances educational practice in the K-12 public school system in BC.

Egan became a Canada Research Chair in 2000 for his work on imaginative education and started the Imaginative Education Research Group (IERG). Imaginative education refers to Egan’s research that shows children learn better when their emotions and imaginations are engaged.

“It seems obvious, but at the same time it’s too often ignored,” Egan says. “Teachers are under such pressure to cover the curriculum that they often feel unable to spend the extra time they assume will be required to adopt a new approach. Imaginative Education has been likened to developing the simple skill with a screwdriver for fixing something to the wall with screws, rather than approaches that fail to engage the imagination and are more akin to ineffectively driving in screws with a hammer.”

The IERG trains schoolteachers to bring the content of the curriculum to meaningful life in the students’ minds. One such program, Learning in Depth (LiD), has students spend some time each week learning about a single topic throughout their entire school career, k-12. Students become expert in their topic, which feeds their imagination and promotes an understanding of the nature of knowledge. Most students take to LiD with great enthusiasm.

Egan says much of the prize will go toward hiring facilitators to further develop IERG programs and make them accessible to teachers.

Dozens of different countries currently implement IERG programs, and hundreds of B.C. school experience it through the work of teachers who have learned to engage their students’ imaginations and emotions in the content of the curriculum.

The award was endowed to the Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University by [Russ and Ellen Cmolik](#).

“The genius of Egan’s Imaginative Education, and the specific application of Learning in Depth, is that it provides a means by which every student becomes an expert in at least one topic, and through this process, their creativity and imagination are unleashed in remarkable ways,” says Kris Magnusson, SFU’s dean of education.

“Learning in Depth may very well be one of the most important educational innovations of the last half century, and could be the mechanism by which the potential of 21st Century Learning can be realized.”

ABOUT SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY:

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 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 Canada’s leading comprehensive research university and is ranked one of the top universities in the world. With campuses in British Columbia’s three largest cities – Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey – SFU has eight faculties, delivers almost 150 programs to over 35,000 students, and boasts more than 135,000 alumni in 130 countries around the world.

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