

APPLICATION—DOROTHY LAM CHAIR IN EDUCATION

Vision Statement

Nancy Perry

I strive to promote positive outcomes for children and youth who are vulnerable in learning and life, including children with disabilities, and children who struggle in school for a wide range of reasons. The fundamental goal of my research is to empower children by helping them develop *self-regulated learning* (SRL) – independent, goal-directed, and effective approaches to learning that can be applied in any learning situation.

I conduct my research through direct collaborations with teachers and in partnership with educational leaders. I believe that making a difference for children requires working closely with, and building capacity among, the adults who structure children’s learning and interact with them daily. My approach is predicated on the view that a two-way bridge must join theory/research and practice through reciprocal knowledge translation and transfer. Through writing and face2face engagements with educators, I share my research findings and, hopefully, inform practice. However, without opportunities to observe in classrooms and interact with teachers and learners, I would have no research findings to share. These transactions enrich my theoretical understandings and lead to progressive improvements in my research.

I welcome the opportunity to apply for the Dorothy Lam Chair in Education, as its dual emphasis on advancing knowledge and improving educational practice is well matched with the foci of my scholarship to date, and what I hope to achieve in the future. This opportunity comes at a significant juncture in my academic life. As a consequence of opportunities afforded me by involvement in *Changing Results for Young Readers* (Ministry of Education), a Research Professorship funded by a generous donor, and funding from SSHRC, my research in kindergarten to grade 12 classrooms has established a broad and sturdy base for launching new projects that will benefit children and youth. Also, as SRL research has captured the attention of teachers and policy makers over the past several years, there are currently many opportunities for researchers to forge productive partnerships with community-based colleagues. In response, my colleague, Deborah Butler, and I have developed a suite of initiatives about SRL at UBC and for the broader educational community. Through these initiatives, we seek to provide leadership for researchers and educators who share our goals to design and implement effective academic, social, and emotional supports for children and youth who struggle in school.

Overview/Context

Self-regulation refers to people’s capacities to control thoughts and actions that set a stage for achieving goals and engaging productively in environments (Zimmerman, 2008). It involves metacognition (awareness of self and of others), motivation (willingness to persist under difficult circumstances), and strategic action (knowing strategies and using them adaptively and flexibly). It is implicated in cognitive, neurological, social, emotional, and behavioural development, and is a powerful predictor of individuals’ success in and out of school—more powerful than measures of IQ, or knowledge of reading and math at school entry. Some groups of learners (e.g., students with learning disabilities, developmental disabilities, ADHD, and emotional and behavioural disorders) are more “at risk” than others in their development of SRL. However, research is clear that SRL is malleable. Longitudinal and retrospective studies of individuals with learning disabilities who are successful in and beyond school indicate attributes associated with

self-regulation (e.g., self-awareness, self-advocacy, perseverance) are essential protective factors. Thus, identifying how to support the development of self-regulatory capacities, particularly among our most vulnerable learners, warrants attention by researchers and teachers.

The goals of my research are twofold: (a) examining how classroom processes—tasks, instructional practices, and interpersonal relationships—can support or curtail learners’ development of SRL; and (b) helping teachers to develop SRL promoting practices. My participatory approach to working with teachers is recognized as a key innovation in this field. I use “teacher learning teams” to engage with teachers to co-construct knowledge and plans for promoting SRL in their classrooms. Teacher learning teams are representative of participatory approaches to research and professional learning that place teachers at the center of change efforts. These approaches have demonstrated that meaningful and sustained changes in teaching and learning occur when teachers and researchers work in genuine partnership in locally situated, inquiry-based, longitudinal and critical examinations of practice. Adopting participatory approaches calls on researchers to rethink how we support teachers’ professional learning and, perhaps, how we accumulate an “evidence base.” However, my own and others’ research shows that teachers’ uptake of research-based practices increases when they engage in inquiry-oriented collaborations with researchers and are supported to increase capacities to adapt, be flexible, and tailor innovations to the unique needs of their students.

Currently, my longitudinal investigation of children’s SRL in school and factors that affect it is revealing individual differences in students’ SRL trajectories from kindergarten through grade 2, and how these can be shaped by classroom experiences. In particular, my research team and I are focusing on children who teachers identify in kindergarten as “at risk” for their development of SRL. We are finding this status relates to overall achievement and, often, whether students later are designated to receive special education services. Our collaborations with kindergarten to grade 2 teachers also are informing designs for interventions for these children, which we will examine for their ability to prevent or ameliorate subsequent problems in and beyond school. In another major project, we are using the lens of SRL to study youth in alternative education programs. These studies are revealing characteristics of those programs that lend support to youth who have struggled in school and, often, in life. We are collaborating with teachers to plan programs, refine practices and assess the effectiveness of these innovations. Finally, my studies of teacher motivation and well-being are identifying factors that help teachers thrive in challenging education settings. This well articulated set of projects aligns well with the Chair’s mandate. We are advancing theory and research on SRL, and providing evidence needed to develop powerful, adaptive frameworks that support teachers and learners in schools.

My Plan for the Dorothy Lam Chair in Education

If awarded The Dorothy Lam Chair, my activities will address what I perceive to be two main objectives for the Chair:

- (a) engaging in research that advances knowledge and improves practice in education, with a particular focus on students with exceptional learning needs;
- (b) providing leadership in the Faculty and among broader scholarly and professional communities through energetic collaborative partnerships and mentoring relationships.

My integrative approach to research, teaching, and community engagement will continue and I will seek to create vibrant communities of researchers (including graduate researchers) and practitioners. Below are four examples of planned activities that meet these standards.

In the Fall, I will submit an application to renew funding from SSHRC to continue the longitudinal study of children's development of SRL described above. This research will extend data collection for children who entered my project as kindergarteners in 2013 through grades 3 to 7, and continue to track how these children's experiences in school (i.e., exposure, or not, to SRL promoting practices) impact success in school over time. **The study will pay particular attention to children with exceptional learning needs and how teachers' use of SRL promoting practices affects their SRL and success in school. Relatedly, the study will examine the efficacy of teachers' uses and adaptations of SRL-promoting practices as a framework for providing meaningful classroom-based support to *all* learners.**

As indicated above, Deborah Butler and I have been collaborating to develop a suite of initiatives that both inform and are informed by our synergistic research programs. The *BEd SRL Cohort* exists in UBC's Teacher Education Program. Deborah and I teach the Cohort (Inquiry Seminars 1 and 2) and collaborate with the Cohort's Faculty Associate to articulate teacher candidates on and off campus introduction to SRL principles and practices. **We are planning with Surrey School District ways to more purposely place our teacher candidates in contexts that share our goal of fostering SRL. This could take the form of a "professional development school" where teacher candidates and school-based mentors, supported by teacher leaders and researchers, learn and inquire about supporting SRL together.**

At the graduate level, we have developed and implemented *MA/MEd SRL Concentrations* on and off campus. The off-campus cohort is specifically designed for inservice teachers wanting to extend their knowledge about and expertise in fostering SRL. Many of the students currently enrolled in the inaugural cohort have or are moving into leadership positions in their schools and districts with respect to SRL promotion, and a 2nd off-campus cohort is scheduled to begin in January 2017. These Cohorts are arranged through close communication and coordination with school districts and involve additional faculty colleagues. **The 2nd off campus cohort will focus particularly on the relevance of SRL to other educational innovations, such as the new BC Education Plan, 21st Century Learning Goals, Assessment for Learning, and Inclusion.**

Finally, in collaboration with PDCE, we launched the *SRL Inquiry Hub*—a flexible learning initiative designed to support educators' collaborative inquiry about SRL. It includes a 3-day Summer Institute *coupled with* on-going, district located, professional learning across the school year in the context of teacher learning teams. The Inquiry Hub is open to educators at any stage in their career and allows for undergraduate, graduate, and no credit participation. This summer, more than 100 educators enrolled in the Institute and participants from last years' Inquiry Hub and graduate students (including students in the off-campus cohort) had leadership (i.e., presenting and organizing) roles. Deborah and I hosted with our UBC-O and SRL Consortium colleague, Dr. Leyton Schnellert. **The teacher learning teams will meet across the school year and, with recently acquired funds from the John H. M. and Doris D. Andrews Research and Development Award, we (Butler, Schnellert, and Perry) will study how the Inquiry Hub is: (a) providing resources for professional learning; and (b) nurturing systematic and sustainable change in schools (Butler is PI).**

In closing, I believe the Dorothy Lam Chair—with its prestige and resources—presents a substantial opportunity to amplify our Faculty's profile with respect to SRL. I would relish the opportunity to provide leadership to advance knowledge and improve practice in this area, which is so critically linked to positive outcomes for children and youth.