

SMART Restructures Organization, Reduces Budget by \$1 Million

Long-term strategy aimed at serving more children

Portland, Ore. – SMART is restructuring as part of a long-term strategy to serve more children and achieve its vision of an Oregon where every child can read and is empowered to succeed. This includes transitioning 198 part-time coordinator positions from paid to volunteer positions starting this fall, among other changes.

“This is an evolutionary step aimed at positioning SMART for growth,” said Terry Shanley, SMART CEO. “For the past five years, our delivery numbers have plateaued at an average of 10,000 children served each year. We estimate that more than 50,000 Oregon children could benefit from the one-on-one attention provided by SMART. We are restructuring to make SMART scalable without increasing our budget fivefold. This change reduces our annual operating budget by \$1 million starting in FY09. The strategic planning committee arrived at this decision after reviewing many alternatives. SMART’s board of directors, executive team and local managers agree this is a necessary step toward achieving our vision.”

Coordinators are seasonal employees with terms coinciding with the school year. Current terms end in May/June, giving coordinators and SMART ample time for adjustment.

“Our coordinators have a passion and dedication to the mission and have been encouraged to re-apply, as they do every year,” said Brooke Johnson, SMART Program Director. “They truly are the heart and soul of SMART. They know SMART works. Not just by research, but by the parents who tell them SMART is where their child found confidence, or teachers who see that increased confidence in class, and even from the students themselves who have gone on to higher education or come back to SMART as volunteer readers. Many coordinators have been with us for multiple consecutive years, and we hope they can continue.”

Coordinators are responsible for working with participating schools to schedule reading sessions with adult volunteers and students, and providing on-site program coordination during scheduled reading sessions. SMART is investigating additional resources to support this role.

Other changes implemented in 2007-08 include the creation of 14 volunteer Chapters—teams of citizens who raise funds and recruit volunteers for SMART in their local community. SMART has also eliminated a management position at headquarters, and transitioned other positions to volunteer positions. SMART will reveal other changes this spring when the strategic plan is complete.

In 1992 SMART determined that early literacy was the key to reducing the cultural effect of crime in Oregon. SMART started in 8 schools in 2 cities reaching 585 kids. The organization now reaches 11,600 kids in 280 schools across 32 counties.

About SMART® (Start Making A Reader Today)

SMART is a nonprofit that envisions an Oregon where every child can read and is empowered to succeed. We engage community volunteers to read one-on-one with K-3 children who need literacy support. Participating children also receive new books each month to keep and read with their families. Since 1992, thousands of SMART volunteers have been inspiring little readers through storytelling. Together with support from the community, we are building brighter futures for Oregonians big and small. Volunteer or donate today. Visit www.getsmartoregon.org or call 1-877-598-4633.

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