

Christian Schunn

Christian Schunn is an associate professor of psychology and a Research Scientist at the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. His basic research involves studying experts and novices in complex domains like science, engineering, submarining, and weather forecasting to develop new theoretical and computational models of the cognition underlying expert performance. His applied research involves developing and evaluating tools and curricula informed by this basic research to bring novices to expert performance. Recently, his basic research has involved an interdisciplinary collaboration with mechanical and industrial engineers to focus on the nature of the cognition underlying innovative engineering design processes, for example, the interaction of the physical design environment with analogical reasoning processes in highly innovative design groups. At the applied level, Schunn has developed design-based learning curricula for middle and high school science classrooms that have been found to be more successful than existing hands-on and textbook science curricula at teaching basic science concepts and scientific reasoning skills, and developing interest in engineering, science, and technology careers. He has recently been involved in recent NRC/NAE efforts to evaluate and define the nature of engineering at the K–12 level as well as explore the creation of national K–12 engineering standards. He received his Ph.D. from Carnegie Mellon in 1995.