



## PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS THE SCHOOLS AS COLLABORATIVE LEARNING COMMUNITIES

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### ABSTRACT

*Collaborative learning community is a philosophy as well as a place; it is a way of being as well as a working model. It is a mindset as well as a map. The foundation of a collaborative learning community is collaboration, working together for common goals, partnership, shared leadership, coevolving and co-learning rather than competition and power given to only a few. Collaboration, rather than isolation, unfortunately, is a foreign practice to many educators. In most schools, teachers do not see each other teach; they do not know each others' disciplines. Therefore, it is difficult for educators to even imagine the far-reaching possibilities of collaboration*

**KEYWORDS:** *Depression, instructed young people, social components .*

### INTRODUCTION :

The focus of the collaborative learning community is learning, learning where students are actively demonstrating their understanding, rather than students passing written tests as the sole sign of knowing. Learning, that is based on conceptual understanding and the ability to apply this knowledge in a variety of contexts, is a primary goal within a collaborative learning community. It is a new way of thinking for most educators and the public to know that all students can and will learn, that learning needs to be demonstrated, that it is important to learn not only facts, but also conceptual relationships of ideas and the processes and positive attitudes of learning. There is much talk about thinking and problem-solving skills, multiple intelligences, learning styles and fostering creativity; yet, implementation of these ideas are often referred to separate programs. They have not yet been embedded in each and everything that is taught. Putting the focus on student learning, rather than teacher telling or covering the content, means students take responsibility for their own learning, learning experiences are geared to students' interests and needs, students are actively engaged in learning in a variety of groups and contexts and learning is understood, applied and internalized.

Collaboration and learning happen within the context of community. The schools reflect the population and background of the larger community; therefore, collaborative learning communities can help students to learn the attitudes, knowledge and skills that benefit all in the community and can facilitate to expand the learning process.

### **The Major Characteristics of Collaborative Community:**

The major characteristics of community are sense of Shared Purpose, Respect for Differences, Agreement on Core Values, Acceptance, Participation, Trust, Communication, Collaboration, Commitment, Reciprocity, Conscious Choice, Accountability, Shared Responsibility, Efficacy, Equity, Perceived Skill, Openness, & unity.

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**The question is up-to what degree are these evident in our classroom and school?**

"Communities, are places or entities where each member can give something, where they can contribute something that they feel especially able to give, something that they are good at. The gift from each member is valued by the whole community and all gifts are unique and individual. The gift that community gives back to each member is that of a role and a connection." Ed Margaron

**Collaborative Learning Communities** - The whole of these parts - combines each of the individual elements listed above into a vital, flourishing, and thriving living system. Every living systems in nature has the following dynamics constantly at work to help it become a continually growing and renewing system viz interdependence of members, nourishing relationships, structure and pattern, sustainability through feedback and recycling of materials, energy flow and cycles, partnership, coevolution and co-learning, diversity through a variety of relationships, flexibility and networks that are self-organizing, self-renewing.

**Creating a Collaborative Learning Community:** To create collaborative learning community one needs to think and operate systemically. Systemic thinking is based on whole rather than parts, relationships rather than individuals, or separated objects, process rather than structure, networks rather than hierarchy, quality rather than quantity, sufficiency rather than scarcity, sustainability rather than exploitation, dynamic balance rather than constant growth, interdependence rather than independence, cooperation rather than competition, approximation rather than absolute truth, conservation rather than expansion, and partnership rather than domination.

When one thinks systemically than one recognizes that one can not change one thing in a system without it affecting everything else. One can not change curriculum from fact-based to conceptual-based without changing teaching and learning strategies and assessment procedures, in order to develop the school as a collaborative learning community, the entire staff community needs to have a common vision and agreed upon outcomes for student learning and performance. This is a necessary starting point for school re-creation - what is education for? what are our outcomes for students when they leave our school community? what is our school culture and desirable culture for accomplishing our vision and outcomes?. Just as a cooperative structure in cooperative learning does not make a collaborative classroom, so too, only changing the structure in a school will not make a collaborative school without a culture and friendly environment that supports it. In a collaborative learning community, the classroom environment, the curriculum, effective teaching and learning strategies, and assessment procedures are aligned and reflect a core philosophy and values about teaching and learning. Everything that is done in the classroom moves students toward the desired outcomes.

**Role of Teachers/Administrators as Teacher/Learner:**

The educators cannot change who they teach, what they teach, how they teach and how they assess what they teach without opportunities to work together. The staff needs to strategize on how to break teacher/administrator isolation; they need to increase their own relations. In addition, each person involved in schools needs to see themselves as continuous learners with a faith and the love of learning and life-long learning practices they desire for their students. We cannot re-create schools as collaborative learning communities without sustained professional development and collaborative reflection practices, such as action research, coaching, mentoring, etc. Another aspect of seeing ourselves as teachers and learners in this constant process of change is accountability. Like our students, every educator in the system must grow and learn. If students are keeping journals and learning logs, why are the educators? If students are engaging in research and keeping portfolios, why aren't the teachers? We know what facilitates good learning and we need to apply it to ourselves, if we truly are to become a self-renewing learning organization.

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**CONCLUSION:**

The waves of transformation are spreading through the portals of our schools. The words collaborative learning communities are now a days often used in meetings, classrooms and curriculum documents. We need to use this opportunity to really examine what we think education is, what we see as desired outcomes for students and how we think learning is facilitated. We need to construct our own meaning, in our own context, of a collaborative learning community. It is a philosophy as much as a place. Accordingly the teacher educators should make necessary arrangements and efforts for development of collaborative community culture among students to ensure the future.

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