

Professional Reflections

Collaborative Teaching: Bringing Out Harmonious Strengths

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My current research study focuses on collaborative teaching. I am particularly interested in how teachers work together, create a supportive professional culture, and provide best teaching practices. When teachers work together they cooperatively create a different cultural norm. Collaboration creates positive classroom environments; and since teachers usually share similar goals on their students' achievements, it only makes sense that they should work together as a team toward their identified goals.

Research on teaching practices consistently point to collaboration as an aspect of professional development that substantially generates impacts on instructional practice and improves student achievement outcomes (Glover, McCormack, & Smith-Tamaray, 2015; Keller, & Kusko, 2015; Glasswell, Singh, & McNaughton, 2016). In such a collaborative teaching environment, teachers have to think about where the strengths of each individual teacher lie. When individual teachers put those strengths together, productivity might be difficult to achieve at first because teachers have different teaching styles. However, if they are persistent with their efforts and they are willing to put in their time, they will find collaboration helping them to diffuse conflicting dynamics, and fosters a collaborative culture that puts the students' learning first (Gladman, 2015; Killion, 2015; Tanghe, & Park, 2016).

A collaborative environment is created when teachers work together to examine and question their own practices, reflect on outcomes, and share their personal learning experiences with others. One of the important aspects of this (which I bring it up often in my work with team members) is scheduling time for collaboration to bring out the strengths of each individual teacher. This is the time when school administrators are to help their teachers as well by scheduling allocated time for the latter to collaborate (Ning, Lee, & Lee, 2015; Keller, & Kusko, 2015; Glasswell, Singh, & McNaughton, 2016). Without support as such, it may be unlikely that teachers would be able to use collaborative teaching strategies in their classroom, because they would be tied up with their teaching schedule. With classroom scheduling limitations, teachers with a good initiative on collaborative teaching are definitely unable to make any new innovations happen. Tight classroom scheduling means they are confined to use their traditional teaching approaches which tend to cover contents rather than focus on their students' learning processes. The most important thing in my view is that school administrators must provide for teachers with "collaboration time" to make a collaborative teaching mode possible in their school.

The Author

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Comments: We welcome your comments and also any information that may be pertinent to this topic in your context. Also please let us have your suggestions for the next round of “Professional Reflections.”

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