



Importance of Collaborative Learning

Collaboration has inevitably evolved. But where the average school district lies on the continuum of adoption may have you scratching your head. Nonetheless, today's technology is intuitive. In use within the right learning management system, online collaboration tools are defined by their ability to strengthen any learning community with voice discussion boards, virtual classrooms and academic-centric instant messaging.

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THE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

When students engaged in a common task depend on and are accountable to each other, one could say that collaborative learning is happening. Substitute “students” with “workers” and you’ll get a collaborative work environment; insert “humans” and you’ll get a civilization moving forward.

Thus, collaborative learning is no small concept; it is the everyday woof and warp of our existence and our very survival, and what schools accomplish toward this end of ensuring that collaborative learning happens successfully dictates our future success as a society and a civilization.

In the larger view, having recently moved out of agrarian and industrial models of production into an information-centric world marketplace, collaborative learning has only increased in significance. From smoke signals to electric telegraphs to cell phones, consider, briefly, the state of our current communications technology: never before in our history as a planet has there been so much collaboration possible and never before has change accelerated at the rate it currently unfolds ahead of us.

Indeed, interesting times lie ahead as our only constant is change.

In an informal survey, educators and technologists involved with collaborative learning technologies were asked to look back at the changes in their field over time and characterize its general rate. Without exception, “drastic” change has occurred, in their observation, not in the last quarter century, the last decade, or even the last five years, but in only the last three years have drastic changes in education, fueled by collaborative learning and technology tools, really taken off.

Collaborative learning solutions of the last few years are no longer recognizable for someone just waking up after a five-year nap. Minimally, today’s tools quickly render anything older obsolete, and anyone not involved in the movement forward must rapidly catch up or be cut out from how learning, working and living is carried on.

In short, stay awake to change or be forever left behind.

Yes, everywhere you look, a new era has arrived – but have you arrived with it? More than a fickle bit of newfound-catchphrase excitement over a millennium flip of the calendar, “21st Century Skills” have, over the last decade, held on and only gained in importance. Perhaps the leading advocacy organization defining and infusing these skills into education today.

Emphasizing both collaboration and technology in schools, the Partnership sets forth the following as basics under the heading of communication and collaboration :

- Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively through speaking and writing.
- Demonstrate ability to work effectively with diverse teams.
- Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal.
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work.

The focus on 21st-century skills and their relevance in elementary, middle and high school is inarguably vital. Collaborative learning solutions, as leading-edge communication tools, thus play a leading role in enabling the development of those skills.



AN EVOLUTION OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

In education, where the mantra has been “no child left behind” and other variations of such, collaborative learning technologies provide solutions to address the whole school environment, so that neither are the parent, teacher nor administrator left behind.

In the past, collaborative learning has meant getting out of assembly-line, industrial model classroom rows and into what many consider the very core of true learning: constructivist, project-oriented groups; the breaking down of classroom sizes into manageable teams where interaction, communication, synthesis and analysis can more readily and frequently occur.

In other words, collaborative learning solutions have meant any arrangement, pedagogy or tool that assists in making classrooms better reflect the modern, post-industrial workplace, where purposeful teams execute meaningful projects in working toward common goals. Since the mid to late-1990s, the “tools” consisted of (among other technologies) email, online message boards, overhead projectors, website research and, more recently, instant messaging and text messaging.

But collaborative learning solutions extend beyond a limited scope of merely helping to increase engagement and to provide more equitable access to students; they also very clearly generate opportunities for teachers to further their own learning. Parents, administrators and school leadership can also benefit from collaborative learning solutions.

And as we head full-thrust into the second decade of the 21st Century with increased social networking and video technologies that comprise what many have termed “Web 2.0” –collaborative learning solutions are evolving once again – and heavily influence the arrangement and pedagogy of education as we know it.

Today, collaborative learning solutions imply the incorporation of rapidly-evolving technological Web 2.0 tools and, while collaboration retains much of its past basic meaning, collaborative learning solutions are now also comprised of a rich mesh of tools.

Such tools invariably address synchronous/asynchronous learning, adding educational value, and are seamlessly integrated with learning management systems for use in virtual and blended learning environments. These tools add real-time communication and multimedia to a rich learning environment. With technology now available, educators, administrators, parents and students should expect a safe place for collaboration between teachers and among students to improve student achievement and address multiple learning styles.

Using tools such as virtual classrooms, voice discussion boards and controlled instant messaging in tandem with a learning management system helps educators expand learning opportunities to students regardless of where they live, how they learn or what is available to them at their school or district without leaving a secure, managed learning space. With the combination of these tools participants immediately experience:

- More student engagement.
- More equitable access for all students.
- Opportunities for teachers to further their own learning.

Certainly, text-based collaboration is highly effective on its own, and when enhanced with voice, voice and video, and other means of establishing a virtual presence, students, teachers and others report experiencing a feeling that the lights have turned on.

The Digital Generation

“It’s the wave of the future, They’re the digital generation. They are the digital natives. We are the digital immigrants,” says Dr. Merriwether. “They’re very comfortable with the computer, comfortable with what they use, with all the aspects of collaboration technology. It’s very convenient for many of our students and very wonderful.”

Kids are getting brought up by seeing very effective cartoons their imaginations and communication effectiveness is much faster than us, Most of them love to get connected virtually. Modern lifestyle pushing themselves to get addicted to the online world. Then why not the schools / Education systems to start thinking to create a common platform for them to get connected and improve their existing connections to use effectively to learn.

All New Generation schools are coming up with such key initiatives, Legacy schools are getting adopted slowly !! But when we conducted a reality check on technology adoption at schools, there are hardly some Classroom Solutions, That’s too the contents are created to replace the teacher, Can we call such implementations as technology adoption. Most of the teachers are not willing to use the such systems since they believe the provided contents are not capable in addressing their children’s (it may be because the content standard is high which may be difficult to understand by the student or other way around)

Getting Ready to address the upcoming crowd

“Global Technology Conclave, A drive from SIPSS-GLOBAL to empower the educators to discover most efficient IT solutions and technologies. The objective is to give our part of the contribution to the society in bringing up the new generation by empowering the educators, there are many schools already got enrolled and engaged with us toward in creating the new leap ahead.



We as an organization provide the right direction to educators on how to step ahead, We also engaged in facilitating many Technology events / conclaves / Training sessions to ensure the reach and effective usage of right technology.

SIPSS-GLOBAL’s Proactive initiative deserves the attention of any institution seeking to proactively improve and deliver the new generation education system in the most efficient way.

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