

North Olmsted Elementary

Learning Communities Design Benefits & Research



Fielding
International

Designing schools where learners **thrive**

North Olmsted Community Schools | School Ecosystem Report

A photograph of a modern school interior, likely a library or common area. The room features a high ceiling with exposed wooden beams and a large wall of floor-to-ceiling windows on the left side, offering a view of green trees. The space is furnished with blue and green beanbag chairs and small tables. In the background, there are glass-walled classrooms or study areas. The overall atmosphere is bright and open.

Considering NOCS Learning Communities

What might it look like? Why Adopt this Model?

A Learning Community is...

A variety of dynamic spaces purposefully designed to foster active, student-centered, and collaborative teaching & learning.



Learning Communities have...

- + A variety of spaces for teachers and students to work and plan together.
- + Shared responsibility and accountability between multiple teachers and a group of students.
- + Visible learning - really, you can see it happening!
- + Common assessments strategies and projects amongst classes.
- + Regular review of common data to collaboratively decide how to respond with instruction.
- + Collaborative teaching opportunities with multiple teachers supporting a unit.



4 Reasons

Learning Communities align with NOCS priorities for the future...

1

School Culture + Climate

2

Social Emotional Wellness

3

Teaching + Learning Practices

4

Academic Achievement



1

School Culture + Climate / **Description**



Learning Communities have the potential to...

- + Improve teacher understanding of students' strengths and needs when teachers work as a team.
- + Develop a greater sense of belonging among students as they identify with a group.
- + Encourage authentic parent and community involvement that connects students' lives in and outside school.



1 School Culture + Climate / Resources

Perspectives from other schools

66

My first few months of teaching, I would plan alone, eat alone, and mainly communicate with only my principal. The school climate I was in did not support teamwork. I could tell I was not happy. When I switched to a school that fostered positive relationships between staff and collaboration, my views of teaching immediately improved. My lessons developed because I had colleagues that pushed me to innovate and create. I felt that I had a purpose where I could be my best and I could help others be their best. I go to work happy because I know I am not in it alone.”



66

I was able to witness my students become more than just a class. They transformed into a family where they truly cared about each other and the teachers. They helped each other when they were down and celebrated each other’s successes.”



1 School Culture + Climate / Resources

Perspectives from other schools

66

Middle and high school can be challenging for students. Many feel isolated and insecure and lack the confidence that helps them to learn and grow. Being part of a learning community has given our students a sense of belonging that we could not have predicted. Bullying incidents have decreased, and students look out for one another in a way they did not before. Likewise, teachers also feel connected to their teams and work towards common understanding on a regular basis. Learning communities have built a foundation of relationships that transform how we learn together.”



1

School Culture + Climate / Research

Learning Communities in Classrooms: A Reconceptualization of Educational Practice

Katerine Bielaczyc
Boston College
OTSE, University of Toronto

Allan Collins
Northwestern University
Boston College

From C. M. Reigeluth (Ed.), *Instructional design theories and models, Vol. II*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Excerpt: In summary, the LC approach addresses the needs for students to deal with complex issues, figure things out for themselves, communicate and work with people from diverse backgrounds and views, and share what they learn with others. Therefore educational researchers in America have begun to experiment with different models of learning communities to determine which ways of organizing learning communities are most effective.

[Learn More](#)

How the Agile Classroom Impacts Student Engagement



How could an agile classroom affect the norms for how students engage with content? Could shifting the room shift the culture of learning for your school?

[Learn More](#)

Does size matter?—Considering the importance of size and scale in educational environments

Ulrike Altenmüller-Lewis
Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA

How could buildings be designed to function as a 3D textbook and as a teaching & learning tool?
How might a well-designed space impact the culture and climate by impacting how students feel within it?

[Learn More](#)



2

Social Emotional Wellness / **Description**



Learning Communities have the potential to...

- + Increase confidence and independence among students as they self-evaluate and work outside the traditional classroom space.
- + Offer hypervigilant students familiarity with the students and the physical spaces within their community. They can also scan the area with ease because of increased sight lines and connectivity to all spaces, boosting comfort level wherever they are within it.
- + Lower power struggles between adults and students. Kids own the space and their learning.
- + Allow kids to move through the learning community multiple times a day on their own terms, increasing the chance of meeting their social/emotional needs while staying connected to their learning.



2

Social Emotional Wellness / Resources

Perspectives from other schools

“

With open spaces and visibility, I am able to make more connections with students than ever before. It is not just my class anymore, but the whole community. If I see students who are struggling with a math problem who might not be on my team, I am able to help and connect with them due to my sense of responsibility to our community and common goal of helping all learners succeed. We also have more teachers to help personalize learning. For example, when creating our passion project, we connected students with teachers with the same interests. The students felt more of a connection and were able to see how their passion can grow and continue outside of the classroom.”



2

Social Emotional Wellness / Research

Perceived interplay between flexible learning spaces and teaching, learning and student wellbeing

Katharina E. Karijppanon¹ · Dylan P. Cliff² · Sarah L. Lancaster¹ · Anthony D. Okely² · Anne-Maree Parrish¹

Received: 31 May 2017 / Accepted: 31 October 2017
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Excerpt: “As educators rethink pedagogy and increasingly employ a student-centered approach, the industrial-age layout of classrooms, typified by rows of desks and chairs, no longer lends itself to the educational practices taking place...”

[Learn More](#)



Detailed report on the impact of Learning Communities on teachers.

[Learn More](#)

A Social Network Perspective on Teacher Collaboration in Schools: Theory, Methodology, and Applications

NIENKE M. MOOLENAAR
University of Twente, The Netherlands, and University of California, San Diego

What might be the social impact of a collaborative approach on educators?

[Learn More](#)

3

Teaching + Learning Practices / **Description**

Learning Communities have the potential to...

- + Cultivate best practices within learning communities and across schools.
- + Increase teacher collaboration by having teaching and learning on display across the physical environment.
- + Increase student collaboration by modelling what it looks like to work together in a visible and celebrated manner.
- + Improve teacher expectations of students as there is now a team to rely on for ideas and expertise.
- + Improve motivation as students and teachers have others depending on them to innovate, collaborate, and meet deadlines.
- + Teach students through interdisciplinary units that integrate multiple subject areas.
- + Build conceptual understanding as concepts are reinforced across multiple subject areas.



What we are finding related **providing accommodations**:

- + Enhanced knowledge of students as teachers discuss students with their LC colleagues.
- + Increased frequency, quality, and authenticity of teacher-student and student-student connections.
- + More flexible student groupings driven by interest, ability, age, and other criteria.
- + More flexibility of core teacher-student groupings in one-on-one or small group settings.
- + Increased information on students for better-informed decisions.
- + Inclusivity is natural. Small group rooms provide some element of privacy when needed, but stigmatized exits from the classroom do not exist.

3

Teaching + Learning Practices / Resources

Perspectives from other schools

“

Working in a learning community has helped us brainstorm more ideas than ever before. In our collaboration studio, we are able to have colleagues around us at any moment of the day. Our glass walls allow students to see pairs and small groups of teachers working together. We are able to discuss strategies that worked or concerns we might have about students. We are not working by ourselves anymore, trying to come up with material or curriculum. We are always trying to improve and make what we already do better.”



3

Teaching + Learning Practices / Resources

Perspectives from other schools

“

[O]ur learning community increased our use of interdisciplinary units as working together with all teachers was a natural outcome of opening up our space. Science was mixed with technology, research skills, and reading, while math could incorporate writing and real world experiences. Students were able to discover how individualized subjects fit together.”



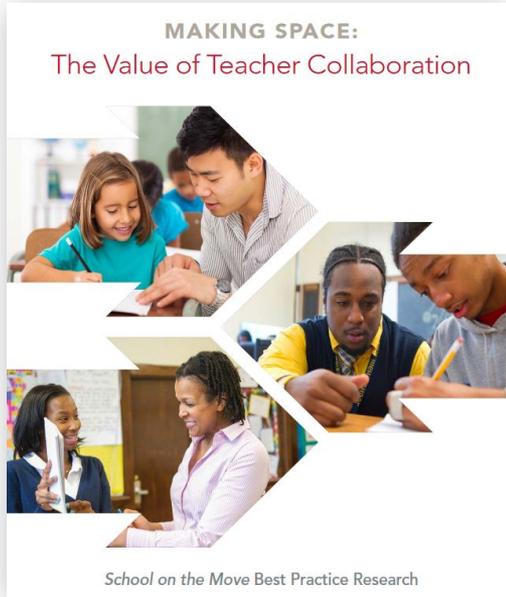
“

Group projects have been a part of the educational landscape for decades, but until recently, teachers often misidentified a divide-and-conquer approach to group work as true collaboration. With learning communities, students and teachers learn and grow with one group of peers, which both multiplies the opportunities for collaboration and necessitates direct instruction on how to work with others. As I began to understand how much time and thought it took for me to truly collaborate with my adult colleagues, I was awakened to how much coaching students need to effectively collaborate with their peers. The payoff has been well-worth the investment.”



3

Teaching + Learning Practices / Research



Learn More

“

Teachers and leaders report linking collaborative activities to a variety of positive school and student outcomes. Universally across study schools, educators note that teams have enabled schools to use data to inform instruction, to increase the school’s academic rigor, and to more effectively support student learning needs – all key factors in improving student learning”

- Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

- + [Why a Floor Plan Impacts Instructional Quality](#)
- + [Vangreiken, an in depth research article](#)
- + [Leana, article on the missing link in school reform](#)
- + [Modernizing teacher pedagogy through collaborative learning environments](#)
- + [Are Collaborative Learning Communities inclusive by design?](#)
- + [Designing Schools for Students on the Spectrum](#)



4

Academic Achievement / **Description**



Learning Communities have the potential to...

- + **Deepen knowledge.**
Having more collaboration naturally leads to more cross-curricular learning and connections. That means deeper learning of each topic rather than silo subjects.
- + **Build student ownership of achievement.**
The collaborative approach breaks down power structures between adults and kids. Kids authentically own their choices, space, support structures, and more.
- + **Improve delivery of content.**
↑ Collaboration = ↑ Conversation =
↑ Clarity of purpose = ↑ Student success



4 Academic Achievement / Resources

Perspectives from other schools

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I have always loved the idea of English and biology teachers offering a Bioethics unit or social studies and math teachers diving into a statistical analysis of population growth and its geographic ramifications, but when we taught in virtual silos, those ideas were never realized. Now, with open space and flexible team scheduling, our students can be found graphing migratory patterns, debating the ethics of genetic engineering, and studying fictional accounts of globalization, with teachers and peers joining them in their exploration. While teachers still deliver content via direct instruction, we are also able to invite students to inquire and explore their passions so that knowledge has meaning and permanence.”



4

Academic Achievement / Research

American Educational Research Journal
June 2015, Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 475-514
DOI: 10.3102/0002831215585562
© 2015 AERA. <http://aej.aera.net>

Teacher Collaboration in Instructional Teams
and Student Achievement

[Learn More](#)

Excerpt: Although calls for collaboration have become widespread, few large-scale studies have investigated how these calls have been taken up in practice... It is critical that scholars understand this key facet of present day contexts of teaching. Researchers are only beginning to understand how teacher collaboration affects student achievement.

- + [Empirical investigation of collaborative approach on student achievement.](#)
- + [Research on impacts of Collaborative Learning Community Model](#)
- + [Why Knowledge is KEY to successful reading](#)
- + [The Holistic Impact of Classroom Spaces on Learning in Specific Subjects](#)
- + [Study aimed to explore evidence of school building design on learning rates for elementary](#)
- + [Do School Facilities Affect Academic Outcomes?](#)



5 year study on the impact of space on learner outcomes.

A Systematic Review of the Effects
of Learning Environments on Student
Learning Outcomes

Terry Byers, Marian Mahat, Kirra Liu, Anne Knock and Wesley Imms
The University of Melbourne

[Learn More](#)

Australian Government
Australian Research Council

iletc

LEARN
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

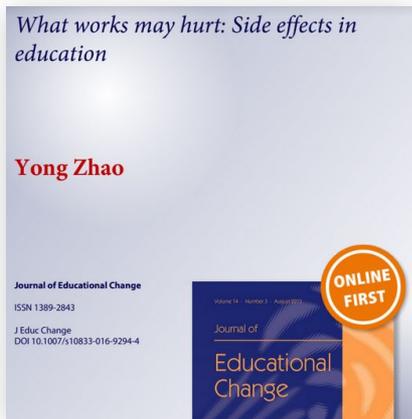
Can altering teacher mind frames unlock the potential of innovative learning environments?

This systematic review draws on studies from the integrated fields of education and design. It focuses on the variable of different learning environment types and analyse their impact on reliable measures of student academic achievement.

Fact sheets: [2](#) [3](#) [4](#) [5](#) [6](#)

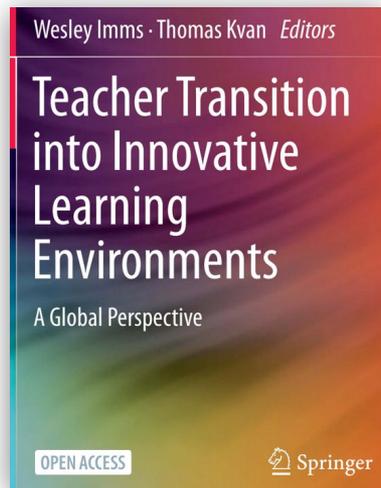


Additional Resources for Learning Communities



What are the unintended consequences of the strategies we use? They've all got some. Standardized test results give one side of the coin, but what other impacts or “side effects” come along with each strategy we implement?

[Learn More](#)



330 pages dedicated to transitioning from traditional classrooms to Learning Communities.

[Learn More](#)

- + [Analysis of organizing around 21st Century Skills](#)
- + [Internal Coherence and Capacity Building for Improvement](#)



A guide written by some friends who have been there and come out on the other side.

[Learn More](#)

⊗ YES!
"Templated" Activities Limit Autonomy and Choice
not just in art

✓ ↓
More equitable Spaces



Fielding International

Classroom features Limit Experienc



Technology use often

Designing schools where learners thrive

agree

✓ Proud of teachers are creative limited space