teacher | librarian

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In This Issue . . .

Maker Movement
Maker Spaces
Disabilities
Learning Commons
Access

teacher | librarian

CONT

FEATURES

ENTS

Thinking Outside the Box, and the Comfort Zone

David V. Loertscher and Elizabeth "Betty" Marcoux

Comfort zones are great things – each of us usually has at least one, sometimes at work, sometimes at home.

If your library is your comfort zone, don't be complacent; push its limits and yours – look at that "place" as a laboratory of great experiments and exciting innovations as it moves toward a learning commons.

This issue of *Teacher Librarian* is aimed at helping you do this. Not only does it present new and innovative ideas for your library learning commons, it also extends your reach for those ideas through global connections. Some ideas have long been an accepted part of the culture of school libraries, but even these need to be revisited. This issue gives them a new and unique twist to help them become more relevant and exciting in the place we call the library learning commons.

In the second of a three part series on Makerspaces, Kurti et al go from the why of an educational makerspace idea to the how of a makerspace world. They explore how to inspire student thought and investigation, and how to inspire students and teachers to invest in new and different creative endeavors.

Woods takes on the commonly understood collaboration theme and reminds us of the core ideas we need to create a successful collaboration. Her own successful experience is retold, providing guidance for others.

Then we have a trio of authors (Small, Justus, Regitano) who introduce readers to the idea of the Project ENABLE (Expanding Non-discriminatory Access by Librarians Everywhere), an IMLS grant program established to train teacher librarians in the art of true accessibility. The concepts of inclusivity are things everyone can try in their own "place." Kowalski continues this theme in her article on making the library judgment free and inclusive to all. Building the concepts of self-esteem with students helping other students and teachers is part of her plan. Todd also continues the concepts of inclusivity with her article and how to work effectively with patrons of the library learning commons that have disabilities, and how to make them feel welcome and

The Success

Personal Expertise

What I know and am able to do; what I "bring to the table"

Cooperati
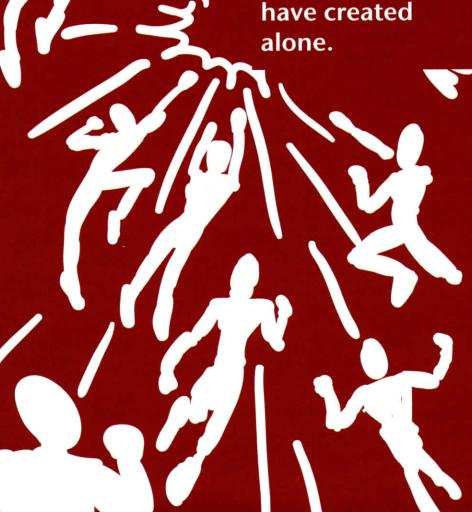
Illustrated by Mark Loertscher

Created by David V. Loertscher
and Carol Koechlin

ful Learner

ve Group Work

Collaborative Intelligence:

My ability to combine what I know with others to produce something that no one of us could have created alone.

My ability to build something to specifications that fits with other pieces to become a working whole.

The Successful Learner

David V. Loertscher and Carol Koechlin

What is the difference between teaching students how to fulfill the requirements of an assignment and teaching them to be successful learners? The first concentrates on a single immediate task; the second focuses on a larger, long-term perspective that can be transferred to any learning experience. The first is directive; the second is self-sustaining and reflective. Which method will lead to improved student achievement? Which method would you rather invest your time and expertise in? Our goal as educators today is to develop and nurture independent confident learners who are in command of their own learning. It would seem that the self-sustaining reflective approach should result in a better success rate. This is something that each teacher librarian and classroom teacher can test with both individuals and groups of learners.

Teacher librarians are often pressured by time constraints to take the direct teaching route. When Mrs. Smith's class comes into the library for help with their World War I research papers, the immediate perceived need is to teach everyone how to search the OPAC and the databases. The hope is that even though the time is short, students will go back to the classroom with at least something collected—hopefully something useful—and they will have absorbed some skills while doing their searches. However, the reality is that later in the year, when the students come in for another research assignment, we find they need the same type of coaching before they are able to get under way. While this may make us feel that we are needed, upon further reflection, we might see dependence at work rather than independence, and certainly no evidence of collaborative learning or interdependence. Dependent learners don't know where to start and often waste a lot of time waiting for an adult to tell them what to do next. Successful learners develop individual expertise and know how to work cooperatively and collaboratively.

"The Successful Learner" poster (centerfold, *Teacher Librarian*, Oct. 2014, also available at https://sites.google.com/site/incommandofmylearning/) has been created by the authors to provide transformation of directive learning experiences into self-sustaining reflective experiences that mirror learning in modern networked environments. The poster outlines three major ideas of a successful learner: personal expertise, cooperative group work, and collaborative intelligence.[1]

Using the World War I research project example, consider grouping students to investigate and document findings on various aspects of the war. Then regroup to combine the knowledge expertise of each group and pose a problem that challenges learners to work collaboratively to develop an overall understanding of World War I. Throughout the learning event, individuals and groups of students regularly engage in reflective activities to build metacognition of content and learning skills. They are successful at building knowledge and learning how to learn.

USING THE POSTER WITH STUDENTS

With the classroom teacher, introduce the learning experience, build some background, get students excited, and develop possible questions for exploration together. Then, before the actual work begins, bring out the poster and ask students:

• In view of the journey ahead, what do you think each of the three concepts on this poster mean?

• Could we make a list of our actions under each concept that would help all of us learn?

Development of Personal Expertise

COLLECTIVE GROUP WORK
• What we know and can do together.
• What we can demonstrate, apply, and build to specifications.
• Our demonstrated productivity and efficiency.
• Our ability to work as a cooperative group.

COLLABORATIVE INTELLIGENCE
• What we know and can do together.
• What we can produce, create, and invent.
• Our demonstrated idea, product, and impact.
• Our ability to work as a collaborative team to produce something that no one of us could have done alone.

• What I bring to the table for any project, job, challenge, or task.

• What I know and can do.

• My ability and determination to improve.

Every time you work on the learning experience together, pull out the list we made and refer to it briefly. Then, at some time near the middle, do a reflective activity with the class:

• Gather anonymous evidence—what kinds of successes are we noticing?

• What could each of us do to move ahead on our journey?

And, after the learning experience is over, invite an administrator in and together ask the students to reflect on the journey:

• How did we use the ideas on the poster to help us in our learning experience?

• So what?

• What could we do better next time?

Finally, the next time you as the teacher librarian work on a learning experience with the same teacher, start planning from the results you achieved together since the last time and decide how to continue the journey. This process need not take a lot of time. Just like every athletic coach who wants to develop a winning team, make the time investment. If you want a winning season, reflection with both individual players and the team as a whole must take place. Coaches can tell the team over and over what they should do and expect them to do it, but unless players are engaged in learning and pulling together, they won't get better. Invest in developing successful learners through individual and collaborative reflection, and they will also have a winning season.

USING THE POSTER WITH CLASSROOM TEACHERS

We have had excellent success with placing the poster on a table and asking teachers to construct meaning. Here are some sample questions we might pose:

• What is the meaning of each of the three different concepts?

• Do we see the concepts exhibited by our students?

• What could we do to encourage self- and group reflection among our students?

During individual planning with a teacher on a specific learning experience, bring out the poster and review the three concepts. As you plan, ask:

• How would we recognize, encourage, and assess these characteristics as the learning experience begins, progresses, and concludes?

• And, after it is all over, how did the learners do? What should we do to have a more sophisticated and successful learning experience with them next time?

We recommend that teacher librarians test out "The Successful Learner" experience several times to ascertain the resulting behavior and learning progress. Document the results, share with staff, and develop action plans to take "The Successful Learner" initiative schoolwide.

Over the school year, as we interact with both individuals and groups of learners with the ideas in the poster, we should start to get hints that the concepts of successful learning are beginning to take root. And, of particular value, there will be evidence of transfer from one inquiry project to another as topics change, teachers change, and sophistication levels rise. It is all part of the track record we create every chance we get to coteach with a classroom teacher.

(Endnotes)
1   In our experience with adults, the difference between cooperative group work and collaborative intelligence is not obvious because the latter happens so infrequently. We all recognize a group project where individuals create pieces of the project and then join them together to make a whole presentation, object, or report. This happens in every industry, as individual pieces of something are created to specs and assembled to make a working whole, such as an automobile or a restaurant meal. Collaborative intelligence, on the other hand, goes beyond the idea of fitting one piece into another to create a product. In this case, we merge the ideas of the group into new ideas, new and creative solutions, and products that none of us could have done alone. One example is the design of the smart phone. It took a group of experts with varying expertise to pull together something innovative. We may have had some vague idea about the result, but a combination of ideas and expertise results in the creation of the new product. Can children and teens do this type of thinking and creation? When we ask them higher level questions, when we jigsaw groups so that there is a mixture of expertise, when we present a tough problem or challenge, we just might recognize collaborative intelligence as it begins to emerge. It is an awesome experience to begin to recognize, build, and celebrate.

NEW BOOS FOR YOU

Arnold, Tedd. **Fly Guy and the Frankenfly.** 32 p. $ 6.00. Cartwheel Books, 2013. 978-0545493284 Grades K – 2. Arnold continues his series with #13 and a nightmare for Buzz! The boy dreams that his pet fly has turned into Frankenfly and is out to get him. In reality, the two have had a day full of fun activities and friendship.

Brendler, Carol. **Not Very Scary.** Illus. Greg Pizolli. 40 p. $12.99. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014. 978-0374355470 Grades PreK-2. Melly is invited to her cousin's home for a surprise party on the scariest night of the year. Along the way, lots of counting of skeletons, costumed characters, and other scary things that are following her occur. With each different group, Melly's use of adjectives to describe the scariness grows from "really scary" to "particularly scary" and "remarkably scary." Lots of ways to use this book for learning and fun.

Graves, Keith. **The Monsterator.** 40 p. $17.99. Roaring Brook Press, 2014. 978-1596438552 Grades PreK–3. Master Edgar Dreadbury finds a machine that creates monsters when he goes shopping for a costume. The book is written in rhyme, and the illustrations will give the young reader the willies and the giggles. After the poem is complete a series of flipping partial pages will provide a variety of monsters to study and create so that the reader becomes the Monsterator!

Seeger, Laura Vaccaro. **Dog and Bear: Tricks and Treats.** 40 p. $14.99. Roaring Brook Press, 2014. 978-1596436329. Grades PreK-1. Loveable Dog and Bear return in three simple stories that cover the typical events during a young child's celebration of Halloween. The reliable tales of costumes, candy, and neighborhood visits are warm with friendship and love. This continues the great stories for beginning readers.