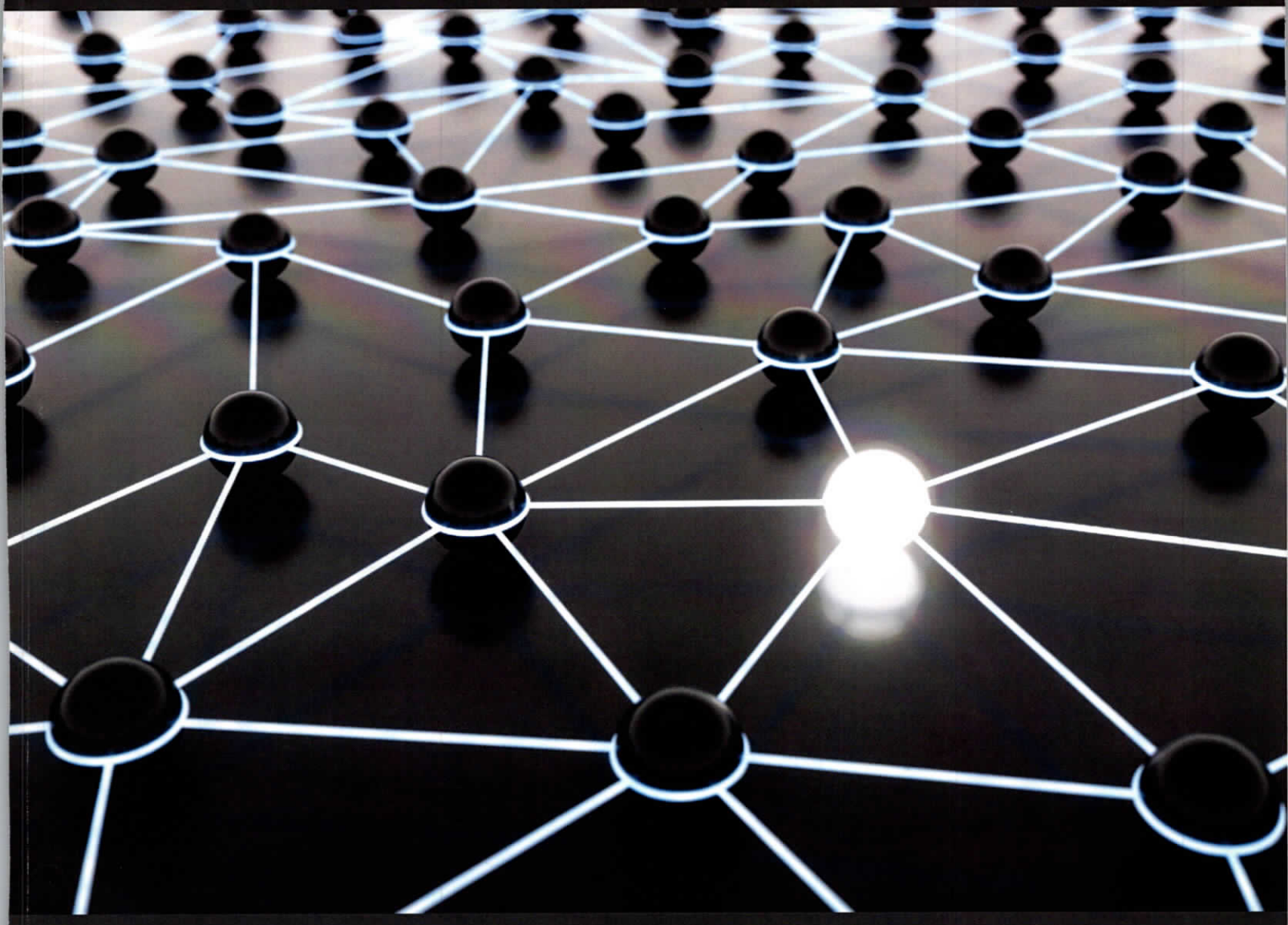
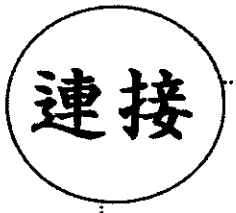
Connections:



Papers of the Treasure Mountain Research Retreat, Nov. 4-5, 2009, Charlotte, North Carolina

Edited by David V. Loertscher



Connections

Papers of the Treasure Mountain Research Retreat

November 4–5, 2009
Charlotte, North Carolina

Hi Willow Research & Publishing

2009

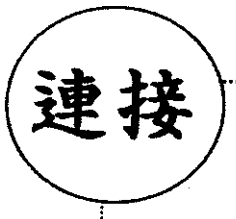
Hi Willow Research & Publishing
312 South 1000 East
Salt Lake City UT 84102-2411

Distributed by LMC Source
P.O. Box 131266
Spring TX 77393
800-873-3043
sales@lmcsource.com
http://lmcsource.com

ISBN: 1-933170-50-6; 978-1-933170-50-3

Note on decorative elements used throughout the book. The Chinese symbol used designates the idea of connections.

Table of Contents



Connections with People and Ideas and the Learning Commons

David V. Loertscher
Professor, San Jose State University

As Carol Koechlin, Sandi Zwaan and I began to buid the idea of a learning commons, we wanted to center our thinking in both the research and the major professional ideas in education and technology. In this chapter, we review supportive idea from the best writers and thinkers we have discovered over the past decade and related their ideas to those we were developing in the construction of the learning commons. Here are the thinkers we recommend to all who are re-examining their foundational ideas of the school library.[2]

The Power of Action Research

Douglas B. Reeves, founder of the Leadership and Learning Center, in his book, *Reframing Teacher Leadership to Improve Your School* (ASCD; 2008), places action research at the center of school improvement. He posits that teachers become leaders when they are testing ideas from research in their classrooms and reporting the results on data walls or science-fair type expositions. The key to school improvement, then, is using evidence that our practices are effective based on increased learning. This follows the ideas of Reeves in his previous book *The Learning Leader* (ASCD, 2006) where he categorized the successful teacher is one who succeeds and knows why.

Learning Commons Connections: In the context of the Learning Commons we recommend that the Experimental Learning Center be the center of such research activity that informs the faculty as a whole. There is an atmosphere of collaboration in the achievement of excellence because everyone expects that this is a place in the school where experimentation is the central focus. It follows that a positive attitude toward continuous school improvement is likely to develop and be sustained across years and across faculty turnover or student demographic evolution. If the action research combines both the classroom teacher and one or more specialists such as the teacher librarian, then the focus of school improvement realizes impact of collaboration among the faculty. Such a focus would go a long way in promoting the idea that everyone has a stake in school improvement rather than just isolated teachers in closed classrooms. For

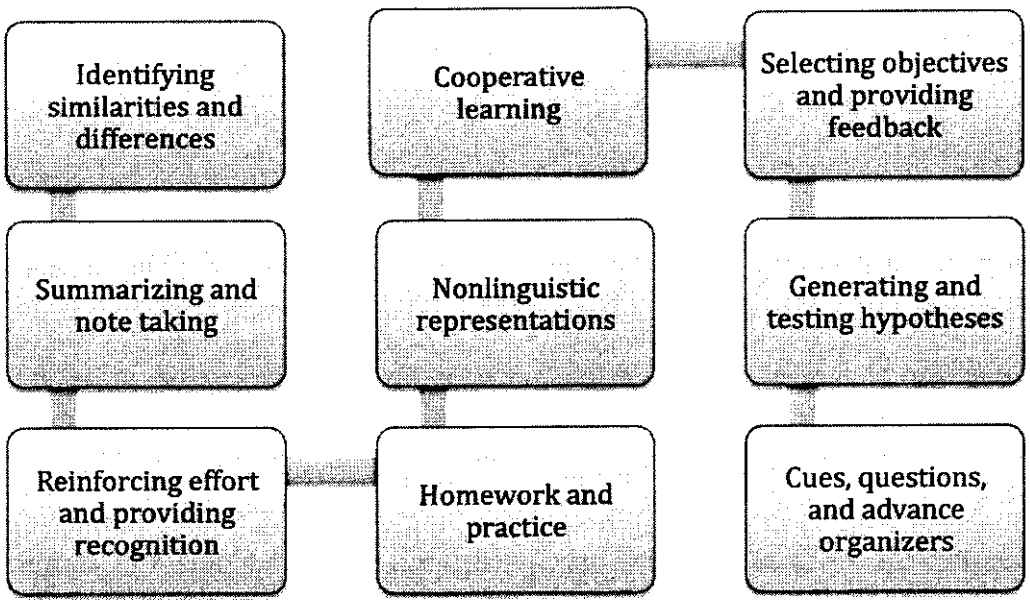
---

[2] This chapter is a reprint of the final section of the book: *The New School Learning Commons Where Learners Win* by David V. Loertscher, Carol Koechlin and Sandi Zwaan. Hi Willow Research & Publishing 2008.

example, the theme of the school year through its action research could be on the impact of actual collaborative teaching and learning resulting in a data wall exhibition for the school board, parent groups, the news media, presentations at professional conventions, and to any other interested audience. What is learned as a group becomes part of the repertoire of teaching strategies for the school.

Instructional Strategies

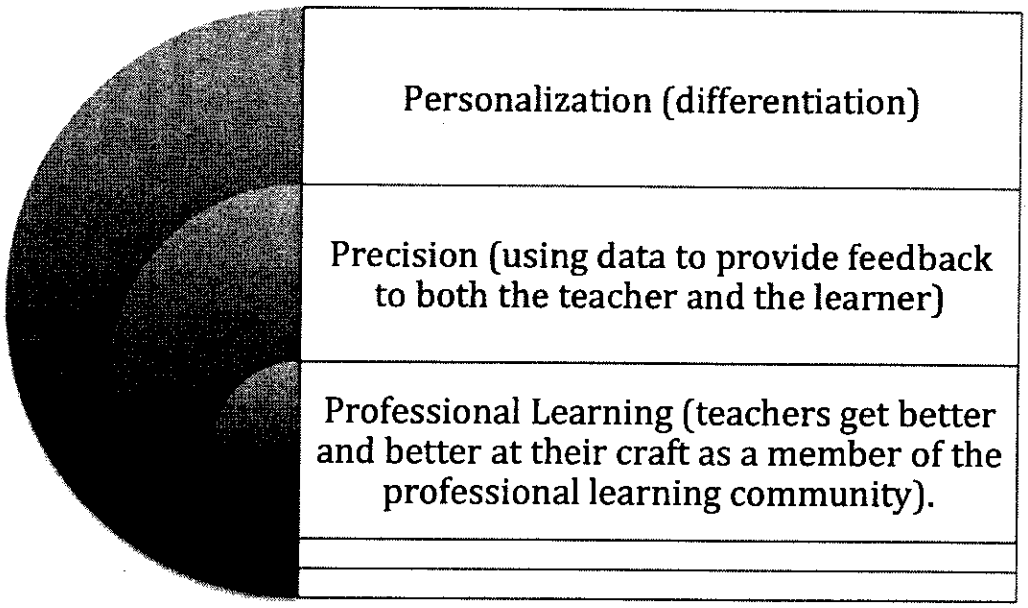
In: Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock. *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement.* ASCD, 2001, the authors of this very popular book list nine strategies supported by research that are worth replicating in the classroom. They are:



Learning Commons Connections: One of the benefits of the movement to base teaching and learning on more scientific principles has been collections of strategies like those above that are supported by research. These and other strategies form the foundational base of all teachers as they mature in their profession. However, teachers need to tailor, test, and reinvent these strategies as generations of learners and cultural backgrounds shift. Using the Experimental Learning Center to bring such conversations to the forefront as a collaborative rather than competitive focus seems to us to be a major step in the direction of school improvement.

Michael Fullan, Peter Hill, and Carmel Crevola

In their book: *Breakthrough* (Corwin Press, 2006), this trio proposes that to make major changes in education and make them sustainable, three components must form the core of instruction in the school:



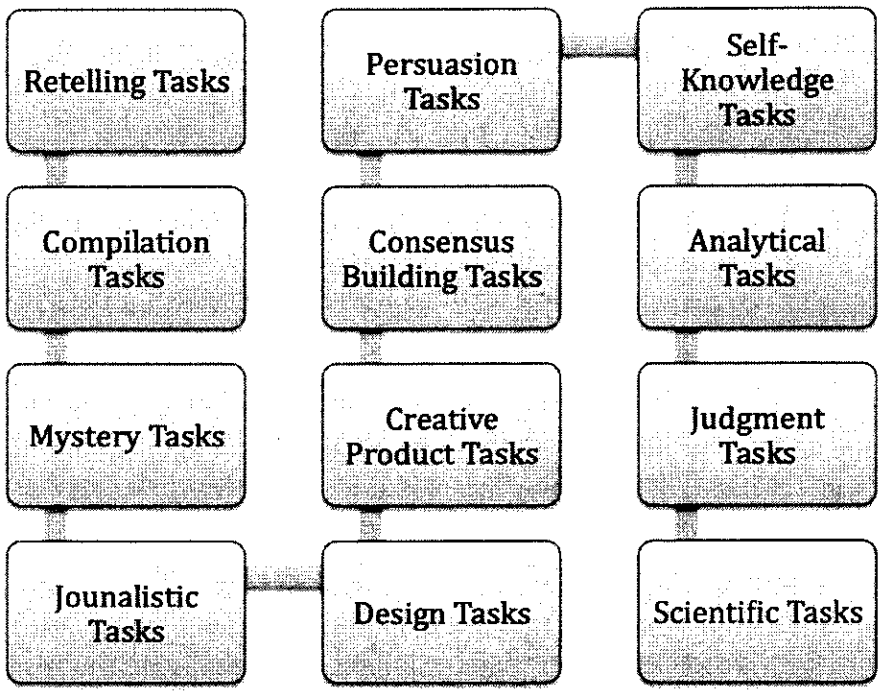
They see a systematic effort that is not just discussed, but practiced and applied to the actual learning activities of the classroom.

Learning Commons Connections: It is not enough to have a professional development session and then assume that something will automatically change actual classroom practice. When the specialists of the school collaborate with the teachers to co-teach units of instruction, everyone in the building knows that new ideas are being tested in the Experimental Learning Community where all can observe and where teaching and learning is examined for excellence and better and better ideas are recommended and tested. It is then that the specialists follow such ideas out into the school as a whole complete with a feedback system for everyone. Each initiative is tracked and displayed in the Learning Commons providing a timeline of progress. Thus, diffusion of the initiative, strategy, policy, or operation is tracked on large graphic organizer charts for all to see and discuss. Sustainable school improvement becomes a part of striving for excellence - both in terms of the percent of students who achieved beyond expectations and teachers who keep improving.

Bernie Dodge and WebQuests

Bernie Dodge is well known for the inquiry projects that challenge users to complete a quest using Internet resources. Learners are grouped and face some type of problem. Each learner takes a different role as the group tackles the web-related task resulting in an authentic project or presentation. Recently, the thousands of WebQuests available have been compiled into a taxonomy to illustrate the types of tasks that have been developed around this model:

Taxonomy of WebQuest Tasks[3]



Learning Commons Connections: The various tasks of WebQuests compare in many ways to the think models created by Loertscher, Koechlin and Zwaan and presented in the Knowledge Building chapter of this book. Some of the best characteristics about WebQuests are their focus on engaging tasks, learner collaboration, and collaborative product building. At the conclusion of such learning activities, it is wise to build a culminating "big think" activity where the various teams of learners develop big ideas across the topics studied and also reflect on the journey they had in getting to their destination.

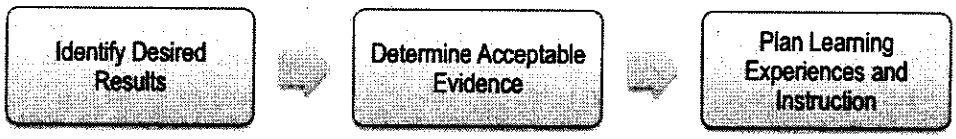
---

[3] For an explanation of each of the tasks, consult Bernie Dodge's website at: http://webquest.sdsu.edu/taskonomy.html

Backwards Design and the Six Facets of Learning: Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe

Wiggins and McTighe[4] have made an incredible contribution to teaching and learning through their development and popularization of using backwards design to help learners know, do, and deeply understand.

Steps in Backwards Design:



The Six Facets of Understanding

Explain	• Provide thorough and justifiable accounts of phenomena, facts, and data.
Interpret	• Tell meaningful stories, offer apt translations, provide a revealing historical or personal dimension to ideas and events; make subjects personal or accessible through images, anecdotes, analogies, and models.
Apply	• Effectively use and adapt what they know in diverse contexts.
Have Perspective	• See and hear points of view through critical eyes and ears; see the big picture.
Empathize	• Find value in what others might find odd, alien, or implausible; perceive sensitively on the basis of prior indirect experience.
Have Self Knowledge	• Perceive the personal style, prejudices, projections, and habits of mind that both shape and impede our own understanding; they are aware of what they do not understand and why understanding is so hard.

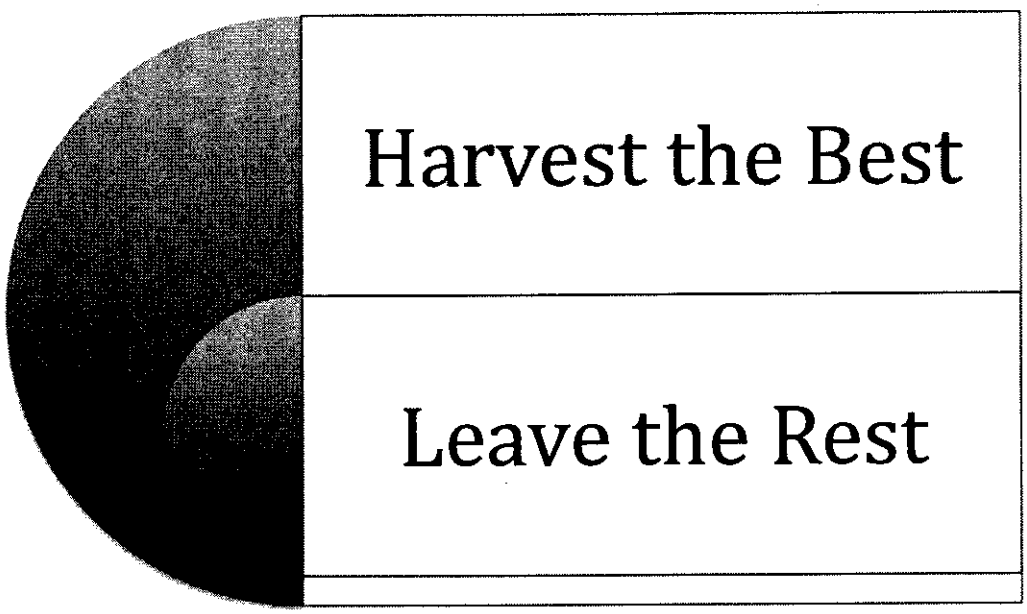
Learning Commons Connections: These elements are the foundational ideas of teaching and learning in the Learning Commons and a part of the major ideas being developed and tested in the Experimental Learning Center.

---

[4] Wiggins, Grant and Jay McTighe. *Understanding by Design*. Expanded 2nd ed. Prentice Hall, 2005.

Alan November

In his most reacent book: *Web Literacy for Educators* (Corwin Press, 2008).[5] November is concerned about the quality of information that ends up in student projects. He provides number suggestions to helping learners ascertain who is saying what to them for what reasons, for what gain, and when it was said. Teachers are encouraged to teach a variety of evaluative strategies such as investigating who created the website or looking at the extension such as .org, .edu, .com, or .gov. November rejects the notion that we should forbid the use of the Internet just because there is poor information, propaganda, even misleading information. Rather, we teach the learner to:



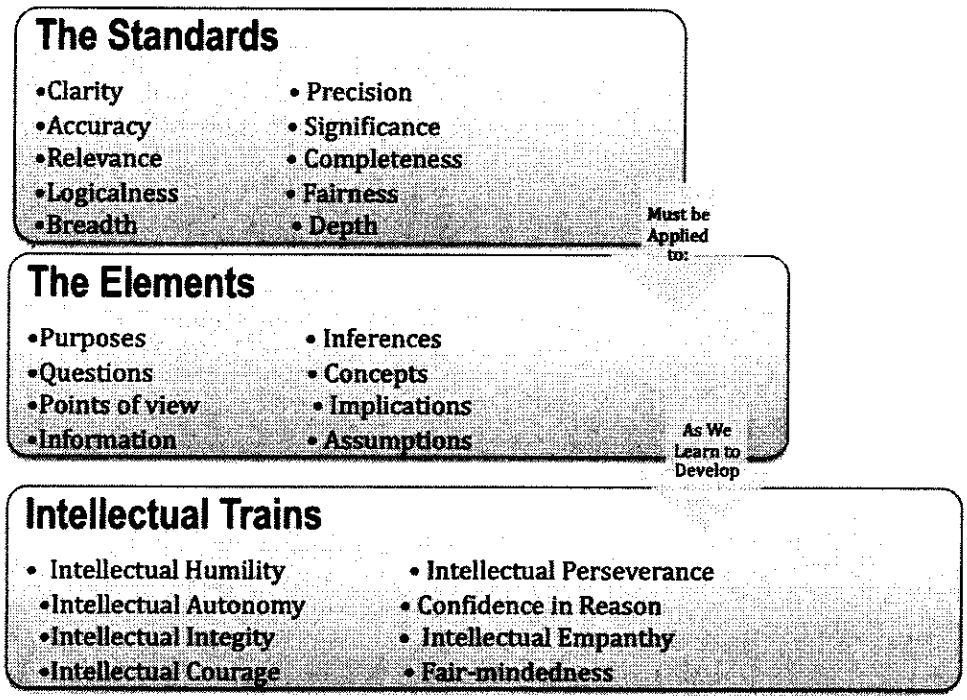
Learning Commons Connections: Since the rise of the Google search engine, the virus of cut and paste mentality has struck across the world. Teacher librarians, as one of the specialists in the schools have been waging a battle to help learners judge information quality before they embrace it as exactly what they need. In the Open Commons and the Experimental Learning Center, quality information is a foundational expectation whether the ideas come from the Internet, a book, a database, a newspaper, or an interview. Discernment of quality is a constant and not likely to be less important any time soon.

---

[5] See also Alan November's web page at: http://novemberlearning.com/

Critical Thinking

The Center for Critical Thinking[6] in Sonoma, California is one of a network of centers for critical thinking and publishes a variety of miniature guides to various aspects of critical thinking for use by learners and teachers. One of their excellent models appears as:



Learning Commons Connections: Critical thinking is a basic element built into learning activities that happen both in the Open Commons and the Experimental Learning Center. These skills are part of the information literacy skills taught by teacher librarians, part of any excursion on the Internet, part of the normal strategy of the classroom teacher. Like other literacies, critical thinking is best integrated into a topical exploration rather than taught as a topic in and of itself. When specialists and classroom teachers build learning activities, critical thinking should be on their checklist for integration planning.

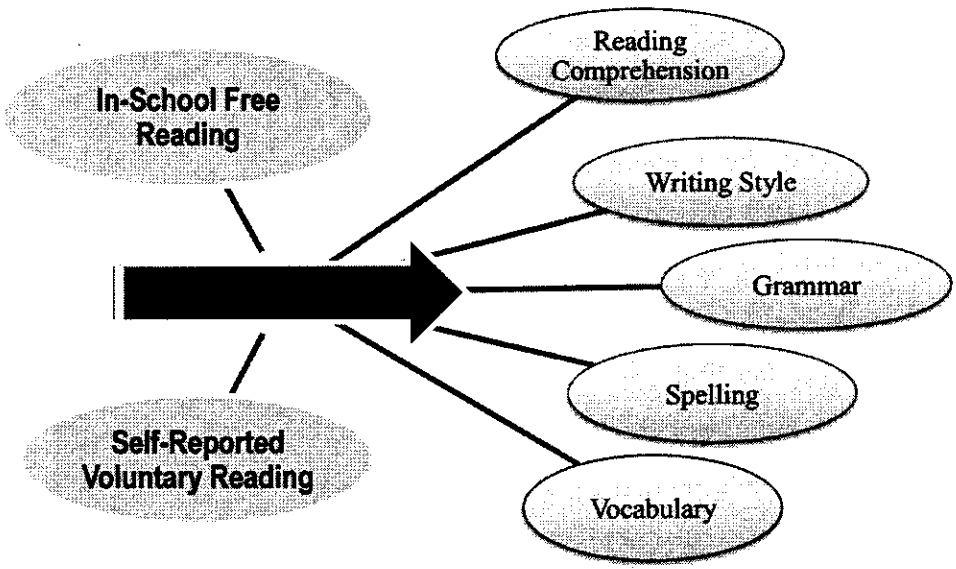
---

[6] The Critical Thinking Community page at: http://www.criticalthinking.org/index.cfm

Stephen Krashen

Stephen Krashen backs up the idea with 100 years of research that kids who read widely score high; but, they also develop a number of characteristics that push them toward excellence.

The Reading Hypothesis[7]



Learning Commons Connections: There is no stronger idea and support for the reinvention of the library into a Learning Commons than Krashen's hypothesis. It is here that learners and teachers have a plethora of materials they **want to read** and access to these materials is far beyond the norm of the past. Now with so much reading being done on the Internet and the very best fiction and nonfiction books available in the Learning Commons, there is really no excuse not to embrace the Krashen idea. Reading is not just skills. It is a life-long embracement. Teacher librarians should survey the learners to find out whether they like to read. With any percentage under 100% yes, then a revolution in the reading program needs to be considered.

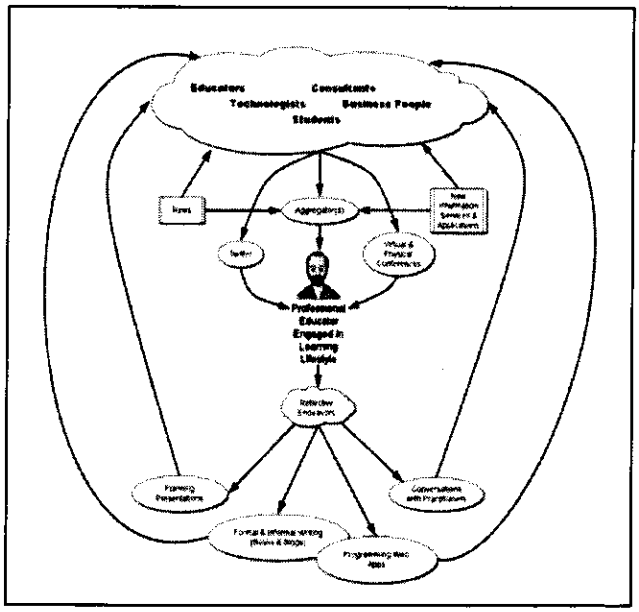
---

[7] Krashen, Stephen. *The Power of Reading.* 2nd ed. Libraries Unlimited, 2006, p. 17.

David Warlick

David Warlick has a very popular blog: 2 cents Worth at: http://davidwarlick.com/2cents/ His musings on technology, the people and conferences he attends help the reader keep up with the current happenings in the field. In one of his columns, he describes his own personal learning network - a neighborhood of sorts that connects him to the world.

David Warlick's Personal Learning Network[8]



I see my PLN as having three basic components.

1. **The Network** – People who have things to say that help me do my job, and dynamic information sources that provide me with the raw materials I need.
2. **The Tools** – Essentially, the avenues of communication through which I connect with people and information sources – conduits that often add value to the information.
3. **My Own Personal Echo Chamber** – This is my own world view from which I teach, where ideas from my PLN bounce around off the walls of my mind and off of other ideas, either losing momentum and fading away, or generating energy and growing.

Learning Commons Connections: We advocate that all young people learn how to command their own information space and learn to govern themselves within this space. Whether through iGoogle pages or some other technology, the idea of being at the mercy of the juggernaut of the Internet is unacceptable. For each of our roles as student, family member, worker, creator, thinker, we must establish various neighborhoods that help us flourish in that role. The nice thing is that we can have as few or many as we please.

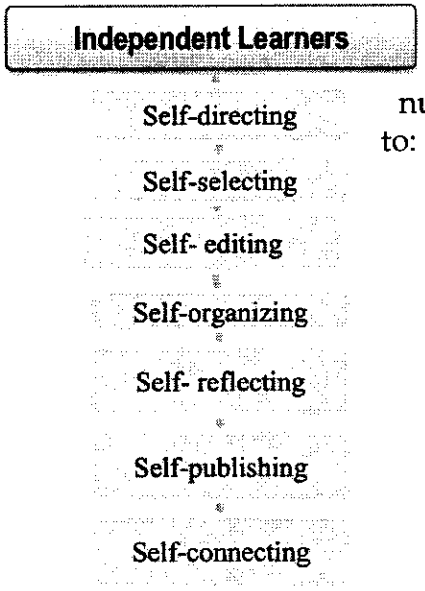
---

[8] http://davidwarlick.com/wiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheArtAmpTechniqueOfCultivating_YourPersonalLearningNetwork

Will Richardson

Will Richardson, a visionary, is about the power of transformative technology and also practical as he teaches us what the real world requires of a new generation of learners. One example from his insightful blog[9] is the following advice:

A number of new Internet technologies are changing the way we find, manage and distribute information. From Weblogs, to Wikis, to RSS, to online bookmarking services, the possibilities for collaboration and sharing are almost limitless, as are the ways students and teachers can benefit in the classroom. Get an overview of the tools being used to foster this new literacy and a framework for integrating them into teaching practices.



"The current educational system creates and nurtures ***dependent*** learners. Our students depend on us to:

- create the environment in which learning takes place
- tell them what they should know, when and why
- provide the context for knowing
- provide appropriate materials for learning
- assess what they know
- select appropriate ways to share what they have learned with others

The new world of learning requires us to teach students to be ***independent*** learners, ones that are not dependent on teachers but are listed on the left."

Learning Commons Connections: Young people will not automatically assume the command of their own learning unless we as adults coach them to do so. Learners often feel that school is a place where adults are dictating what, how, and when to do tasks. As they begin to participate in taking command of their own learning, they become more engaged and independent. They seek more and more relevance to both now and the future.

---

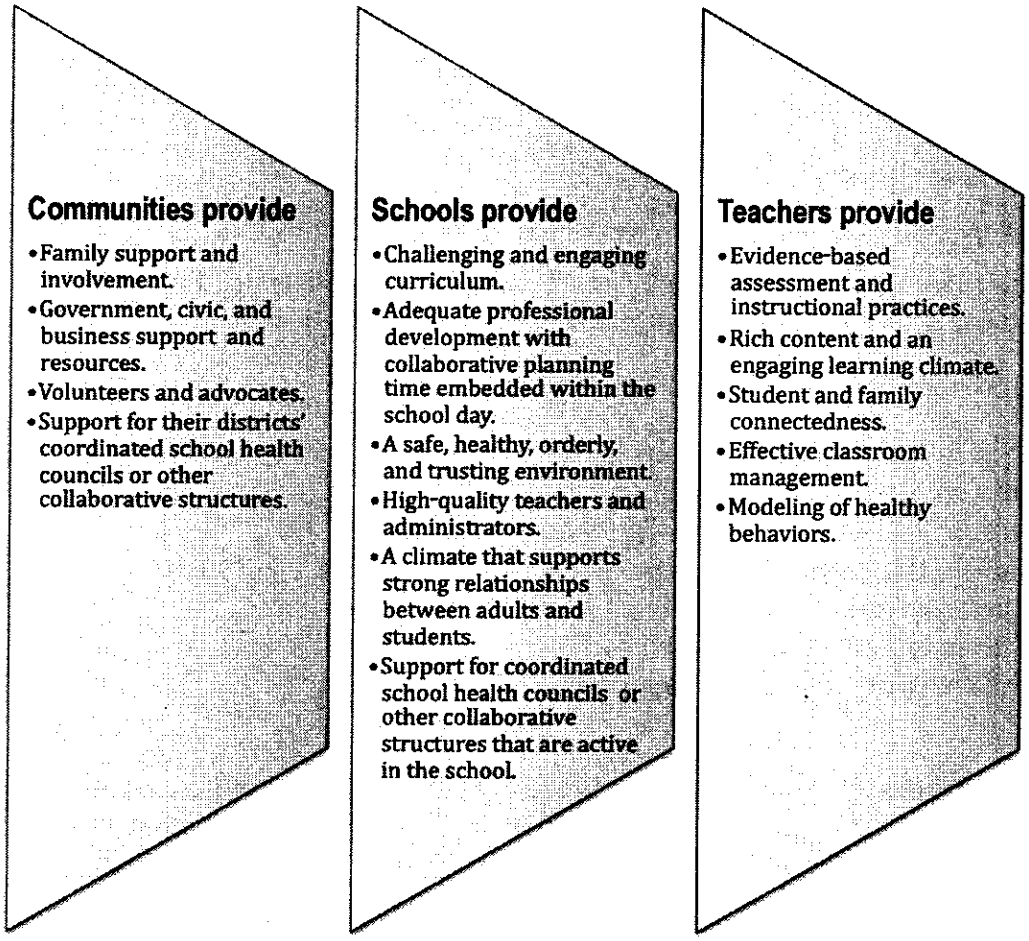
[9] "An Introduction to New Internet Literacies for Educators: Blogs, Wikis, RSS, Online Bookmarking." From Will Richardson's wiki at: http://weblogged.wikispaces.com/New+Internet+Literacies

The Whole Child Initiative (ASCD)

The official statement from ASCD for their Whole Child Initiative is as follows:

Current educational practice and policy focus overwhelmingly on academic achievement. This achievement, however, is but one element of student learning and development and only a part of any complete system of educational accountability.

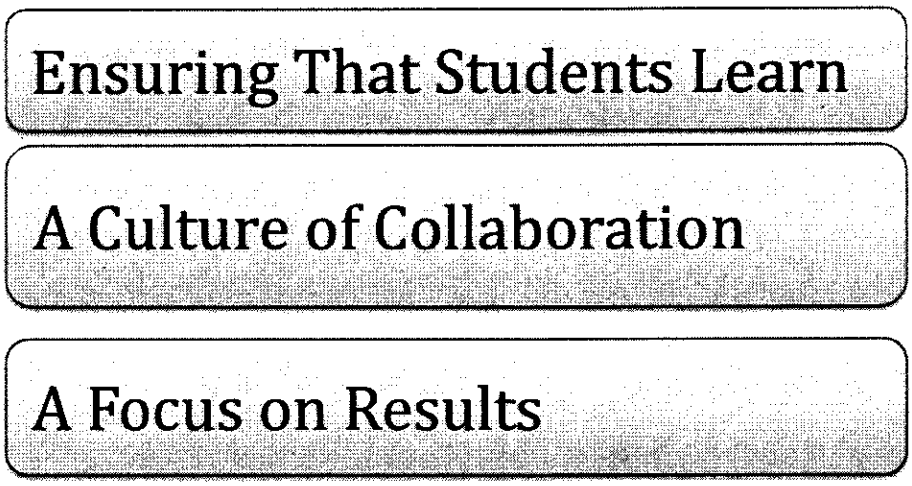
Together, these elements support the development of a child who is healthy, knowledgeable, motivated, and engaged. To develop the whole child requires that:



Learning Commons Connections: The Learning Commons is the perfect place to initiate, monitor, test, and make decisions about such initiatives as the Whole Child concerns of ASCD. Too often, such initiatives are dictated by well meaning administrators but never gain the strength needed to permeate the school. The Commons provides a checkpoint for all such shifts in program.

Professional Learning Communities

Rebecca DuFour, Richard DuFour and Robert Eaker in their plan book:



Professional Learning Communities at Work Plan Book (Solution Tree, 2006) provides three major big ideas about professional learning communities:

They see the following main shifts in doing business:

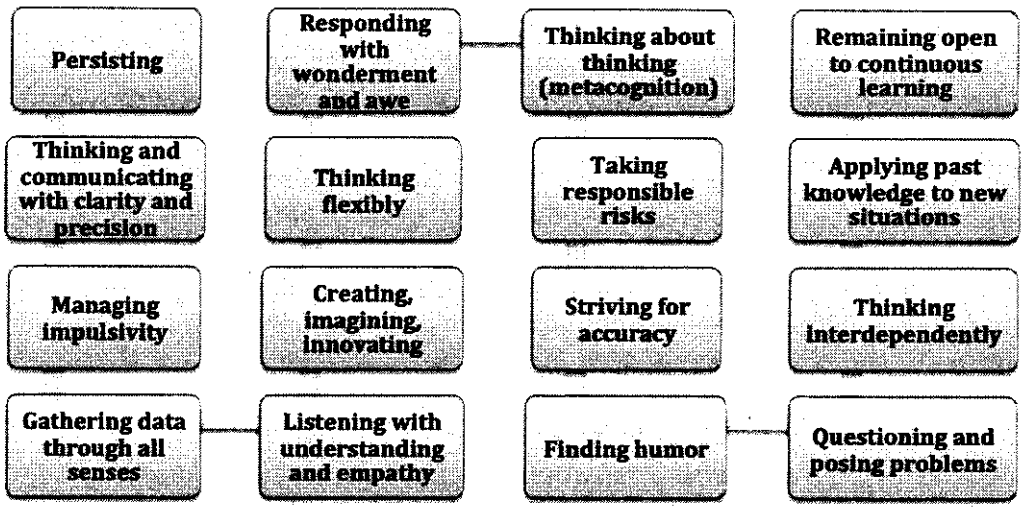
- A shift in fundamental purpose
- A shift in the use of assessments
- A shift in response when students don't learn
- A shift in the work of teachers
- A shift in focus
- A shift in school culture
- A shift in professional development

Learning Commons Connections: The Learning Commons provides a central non-threatening place in which to center the work of professional learning communities. It becomes the place for serious discussion and experimentation across the faculty so that a sense of excellence permeates the entire school. It is the place we can share, test, succeed or fail together, pick up the pieces, and move forward without stigma. This is essential if any school is to make progress as a learning community. Such communities, however, can lock out the learners. We advocate that to turn client side, representatives from the various segments of the learning community be involved, from gifted, to mainstream, to struggling.

Habits of Mind[10]

A Habit of Mind is knowing how to behave intelligently when you DON'T know the answer. A Habit of Mind means having a disposition toward behaving intelligently when confronted with problems, the answers to which are not immediately known: dichotomies, dilemmas, enigmas and uncertainties.

The 16 Habits of Mind identified by Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick include:



Learning Commons

Connections: Habits of mind is the concept that learners should be engaged in their own learning and take control and responsibility for their own progress. The pessimist says it is not the human nature of most kids and teens. We propose that the learning experiences in both the Open Commons and the Experimental Learning Center embrace habits of mind as one of the characteristics. As we all observe in this fishbowl experience, we ask, what are the strategies that engage students and encourage self-direction and independence? It is this kind of sharing and discussion across the faculty that will enable change.

[10] http://www.habits-of-mind.net/

Stephen Heppell on Technology[11]

To listen to Stephen Heppell present is a real treat because of his vision and experimentation of how technology can actually change learning. On his blog, we found the following defense of technology as the enabler of learning:

> *Computers are everyday tools for us all, seen or unseen, but their value in learning is as tools for creativity and learning rather than as machines to develop the curriculum. These tools, in our children's hands, are forever pushing the envelope of expertise that previous technologies excluded them from: they compose and perform music before acquiring any ability to play an instrument, they shoot, edit and stream digital video before any support from media courses, they produce architectural fly-throughs of incredible buildings without any drafting or 2D skills, they make stop frame animations with their plasticine models, they edit and finesse their poetry, they explore surfaces on their visual calculators, swap ideas with scientists on-line about volcanic activity, follow webcam images of Ospreys hatching, track weather by live satellite images, control the robots they have built and generally push rapidly at the boundaries of what might be possible, indeed what was formerly possible, at any age. Little of this was easily achieved in the school classroom ten years ago although the many projects emanating from Ultralab over that decade offered clear enough indicators of what might be possible. The challenge here is to criterion referencing. So often the cry of the teacher that work is better than my degree exhibition piece, reflects a substantial step change in both the age at which a creative act can be enjoyed and the quality of the tools supporting that creativity.*

Learning Commons Connections: In the early stages of technology integration in school, the learners realized quickly how to add glitz to a presentation that would appear as impressive but not necessarily substantive. Rubrics created for all products and presentations should be weighted toward excellence in content and deep understanding rather than the clever or polished use of the technology itself. Slick and polished-looking presentations need to also convey compelling messages that elevate the understanding of the audience.

---

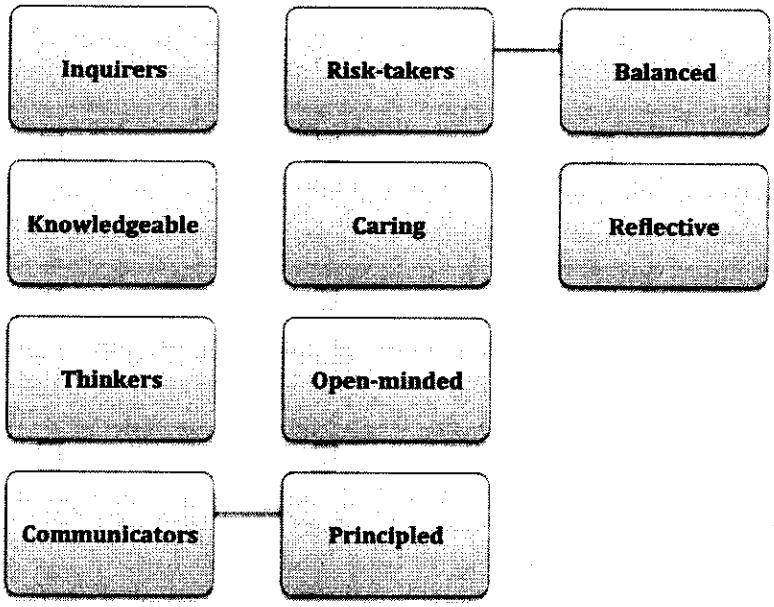
[11] http://www.heppell.net/weblog/stephen/

International Baccalaureate Schools[12]

Mission:

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the IB works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment. These programs encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

KB Learners Strive to Be:



Learning Commons Connections: As we interview the creators of the IB concept, they express to us the centrality of the library as a foundational element to make their ideas work. In practice, our interviews with teacher librarians indicate that many of them are left out of the IB planning and implementation in a school. In the revised concept of the Learning Commons, this and other such global initiatives benefit from the connection to information-rich and technology-rich resources as well as the opportunities for experimentation with this great concept.

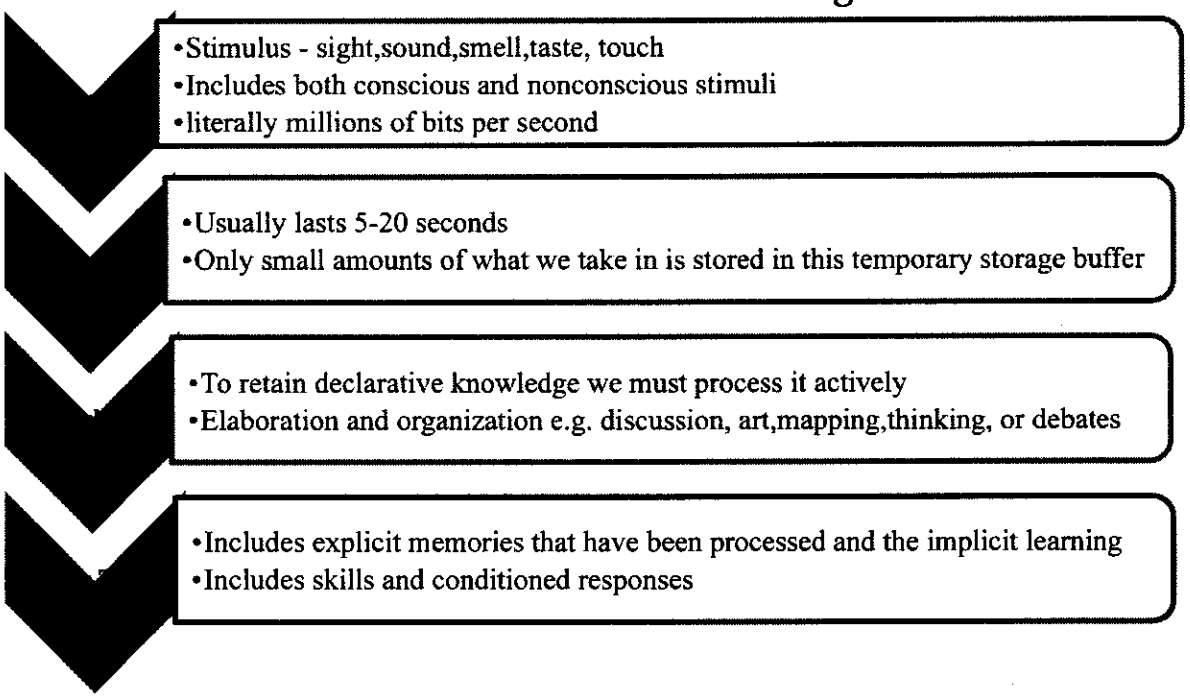
---

[12] http://www.ibo.org/

Brain Based Learning

Scientific advancements continue to unlock the mysteries of the brain. We know so much more about how the brain works, how we learn and even why some conditions for learning are better than others. To help us visualize how the brain deals with information, we have combined an Information Processing Model by Patricia Wolfe from her book *Brain Matters: Translating Research into Classroom Practice*[13] together with a model by Eric Jensen on this topic from *Teaching with the Brain in Mind.*[14]

Information Processing Model



Learning Commons Connections: If we know how the brain learns best why aren't we doing more to design learning to take best advantage of this information? This valuable learning science can realize its potential to enhance learning in the new spaces and places of the Learning Commons. Here learning strategies and environments can be designed and trialed to create brain compatible experiences. Techniques and technology tools to help learners actively process information must be essential components of every information task to ensure that learners attain deep understanding and long lasting knowing.

---

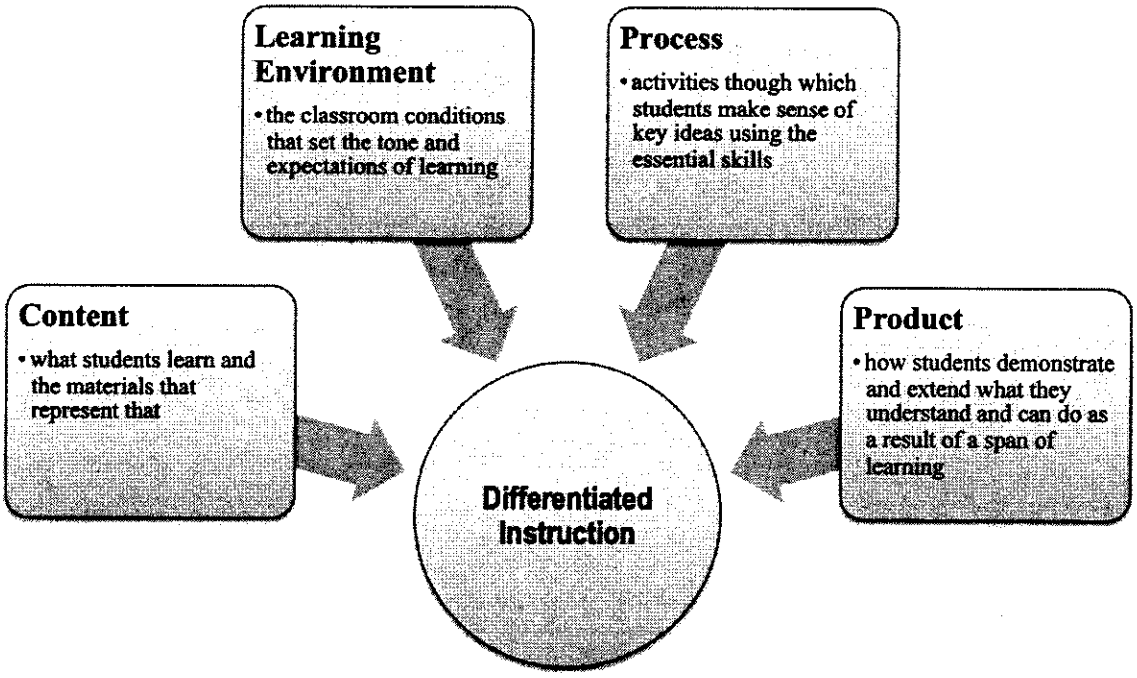
[13] Wolfe, Patricia. *Brain Matters: Translating Research into Classroom Practice*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Curriculum Supervision and Development. 2001.

[14] Jensen, Eric. *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Curriculum Supervision and Development. 1998.

Differentiated Instruction

Carol Ann Tomlinson, a leader in this field, tells us that differentiation is acknowledging that kids learn in different ways, and responding by doing something about that through curriculum and instruction[15]. She explains that differentiating instruction is not an instructional strategy nor is it a teaching model. It is in fact a way of thinking, an approach, to teaching and learning that advocates beginning where students are at and designing experiences that will better help them to achieve.

In their book *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design,* Tomlinson and McTighe suggest that teachers first need to establish standards for student achievement and then design many paths of instruction to enable all learners to be successful.[16] To reach desired learning standards, Tomlinson and McTighe encourage teachers to differentiate for students through the following design elements:



Learning Commons Connections: Driven by client-side needs and opportunities, the Learning Commons is the ultra responsive learning space. The teacher-librarian and technology specialist help classroom teachers to design differentiated learning with rich resources and technologies and strategies. Working through the Learning Commons, school leadership teams can ensure that the Tomlinson and McTighe design elements can be infused in all learning experiences.

---

[15] Tomlinson, Carol Ann. *The Differentiated Classrom.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Curriculum Supervision and Development.1999.

[16] Tomlinson, Carol Ann and McTighe Jay. *Integrating Differentiated Instruction + Understanding by Design.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Curriculum Supervision and Development.2006.

Multiple Intelligence and Five Minds for the Future

This widely accepted theory was developed by Howard Gardner, a psychologist, and professor of neuroscience from Harvard University. Over 25 years ago his classic book, *Frames of Mind: Theory of multiple intelligences* made a major impact on the education world. In that book and in later statements, he identified eight unique intelligences:

- Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence
- Musical-Rhythmic Intelligence
- Logical-Mathematical Intelligence
- Visual-Spatial Intelligence
- Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence
- Interpersonal Intelligence
- Intrapersonal Intelligence
- Naturalist Intelligence

Gardner's newest book, *Five Minds for the Future* outlines the specific cognitive abilities that may well illuminate future directions for 21st Century Schools.

Five Minds for the Future

The Disciplinary Mind	• The mastery of major schools of thought, including science, mathematics, and history, and of at least one professional craft.
The Synthesizing Mind	• The ability to integrate ideas from different disciplines or spheres into a coherent whole and to communicate that integration to others.
The Creating Mind	• The capacity to uncover and clarify new problems, questions and phenomena.
The Respectful Mind	• Awareness of and appreciation for differences among human beings and human groups.
The Ethical Mind	• Fulfillment of one's responsibilities as a worker and as a citizen.

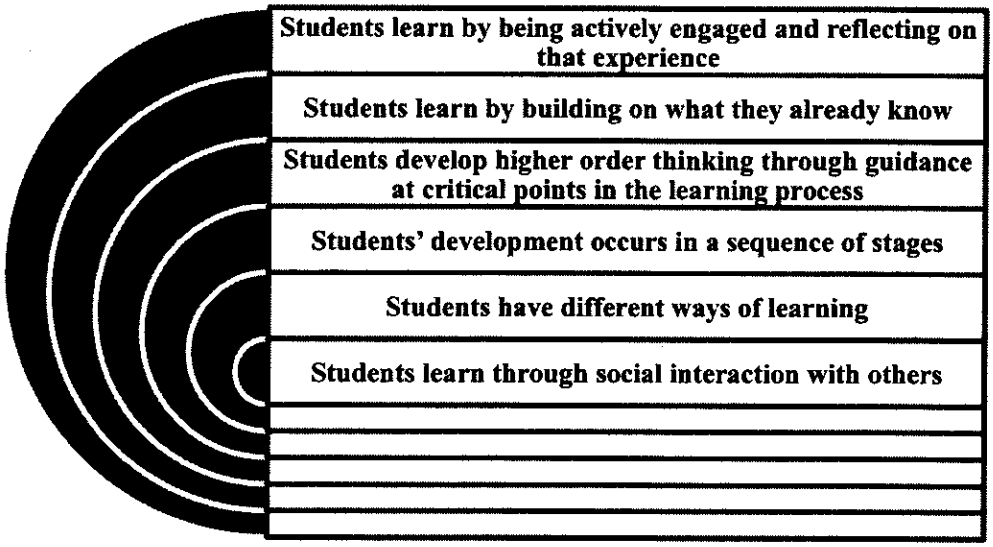
Learning Commons Connections: Gardner provides grounding frameworks for the leadership teams of the Learning Commons who strive for teaching and learning environments where all learners and teachers win.

Guided Inquiry

"Guided Inquiry is carefully planned, closely supervised targeted intervention of an instructional team of school librarians and teachers to guide students through curriculum based inquiry units that build deep knowledge and deep understanding of a curriculum topic, and gradually lead towards independent learning. Guided Inquiry is grounded in a constructivist approach to learning, based on the Information Search Process developed by Kuhlthau, for developing students' competence with learning from a variety of sources while enhancing their understanding of the content areas of the curriculum."[17]

This theory has been developed by **Dr. Carol C. Kuhlthau & Dr. Ross J. Todd at the Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries at Rutgers University and expanded in *Guided Inquiry: Learning in the 21st Century.*** A collaborative space, designed to facilitate sharing information about the theory and practice of Guided Inquiry is found at: http://guidedinquiry.ning.com/

Six characteristics of Guided Inquiry ©



Learning Commons Connections: The constructivist basis of this theory and the belief that learners share responsibility in seeking understanding, supports all work in the commons. The characteristics of Guided Inquiry are excellent criteria for measuring successful design of learning experiences in the Learning Commons.

---

[17] http://cissl.scils.rutgers.edu/guided_inquiry/introduction.html

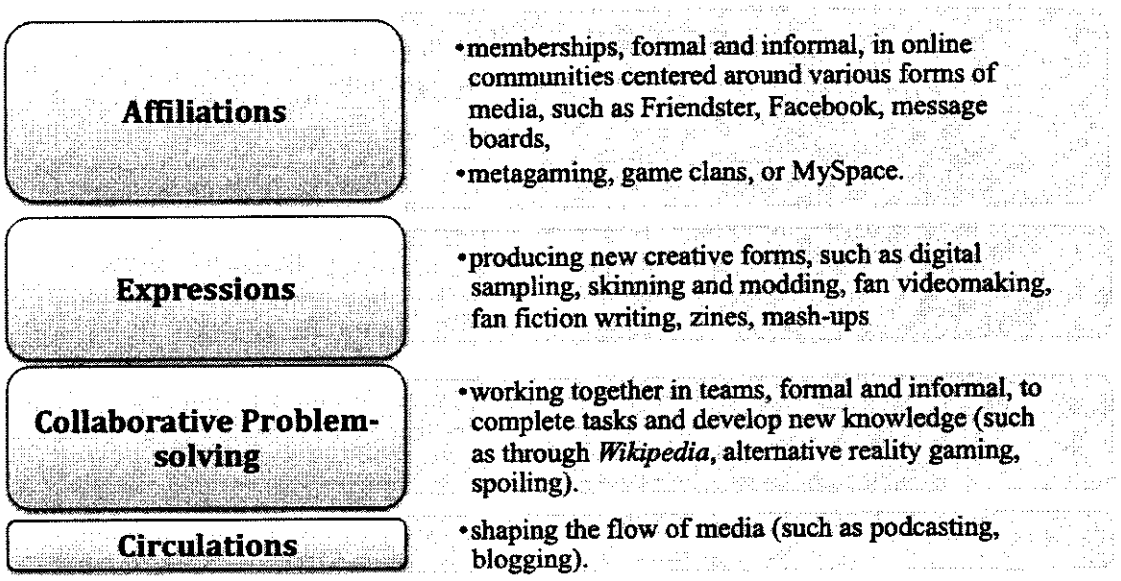
Participatory Culture

Recent advancements in technology and the Web.02 features in particular have opened up new collaborative spaces for users. In fact Henry Jenkins and others proclaim that these advancements have spawned a unique way of creating, sharing and learning called a participatory culture.[18]

Characteristics of a Participatory Culture

- relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement
- strong support for creating and sharing one's creations with others
- some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices
- members believe that their contributions matter
- members feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created).

The paper maintains that while not every member must contribute, all must believe they are free to contribute when ready and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued. The document also suggests that *participation* is expressed in a variety of forms; affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem solving, and circulations



Learning Commons Connections: The emerging participatory culture will find nourishment and inspiration in the client based organization and learning environment in the Learning Commons. Further connections to work of Henry Jenkins can be found at his blog http://www.henryjenkins.org/ and in his recent publications, *Convergence Culture* and *Fans, Bloggers and Gamers.*

---

[18] http://www.projectnml.org/files/working/NMLWhitePaper.pdf

The Current Crisis

An important Canadian report has laid bare many systemic problems for school libraries. This document, *The Crisis in Canada's School Libraries: the Case for Reform and Re-Investment,* commissioned by the Association of Canadian Publishers and Canada Heritage in 2003 has played a critical role in the battle to strengthen school library programs in Canadian schools. Designed with the policy maker in mind this valuable work provides volumes of evidence, based on research that school library programs have a positive impact on student achievement. One of the unique contributions made in this work is a formal recognition of the impact the school library has on cultural identity, socialization and citizenship. Written by Ken Haycock a champion of school libraries in Canada and everywhere, this work is a grounded starting point for change. The document can be accessed from http://www.cla.ca/slip/final_haycock_report.pdf

Dr. Haycock is professor and director of the school of Library and Information Science at San Jose State University. A recent publication *The Portable MLIS* edited by Ken Haycock and Brooke Sheldon provides a broad overview of librarianship. http://www.greenwood.com/catalog/LU5847.aspx

Learning Commons Connections: No change will happen unless all levels of educational institutions and governments recognize the need. This document goes right to the top.

Active Literacy

Active Literacy is knowing how to work information and ideas dynamically to construct meaning. Working with content curriculum today has driven the need for learners to have the ability to apply strategic thinking while reading, viewing, listening to all kinds of media, ideas and information as well as communicating their new learning. Two leaders in this movement over the years are Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis. Their strategies for working with non-fiction have helped teachers understand that literacy involves working with far more than the novel. Link to their books, podcasts and recent video support at Stenhouse.

http://www.stenhouse.com/html/authorbios_32.htm

Another leader in the field of active literacy is Dr. Heidi Hayes Jacobs. As well as her recent book, *Active Literacy Across the Curriculum: Strategies for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening,* Dr. Jacobs is president of Curriculum Designers, Inc. and offers support and professional development for schools in the areas of Interdisciplinary curriculum and curriculum mapping.
http://www.curriculumdesigners.com/

Learning Commons Connections: The success of knowledge building hinges on the ability of learners to construct meaning in all disciplines. In the Learning Commons learners are not only active consumers but also active producers of information and ideas.

Administrative Leadership

Through his many publications and presentations David Booth has broadened definitions of reading and literacy to address the real world of 21st century learners. In a recent 2nd edition of the popular *Literacy Principal,* Booth now lays the groundwork for principals and school literacy leadership teams to advance schools to address the new literacies. He acknowledges the critical role teacher librarians and technology play in this process. http://www.stenhouse.com/shop/pc/viewprd.asp?idproduct=9089
David Booth is Professor Emeritus in education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto where he is Scholar in Residence in the Curriculum, Teaching and Language Department. Further connections to Booth's research can be found at http://www.cea-ace.ca/foo.cfm?subsection=lit&page=map&subpage=ove&subsubpage=dbo
Learning Commons Connections: The hard work involved in reinvention of school libraries and computer labs to support school wide action research and improvement requires the leadership and dedication of strong administration.

Literacy and Libraries

Connecting literacy and libraries is not always as intuitive as we would like. There are a myriad of ways to make those connections for schools. Ray Doiron and Marlene Asselin combined collective minds across Canada to explore this issue in their Publication, *Literacy, Libraries and Learning* and highlight these ideas:

- promoting reading for learning and pleasure;
- improving critical literacy skills when using information from many sources;
- encouraging research methods that respect copyright and lead to original work;
- designing information tasks to help students work effectively with data;
- developing better informational text structures that increase comprehension;
- encouraging the integration of emerging technologies and traditional resources.

Chapters of this publication can be previewed on-line at Stenhouse, http://www.stenhouse.com/shop/pc/viewprd.asp?idProduct=8972&r=&REFERER=

Learning Commons Connections: Whole school literacy is developed, initiated, and celebrated through leadership in the Learning Commons. Improving literacy achievement is an organized and coordinated effort rather than being driven by isolated projects.

Sparking the Middle Years

Adolescent learners have their own special set of needs. One of their characteristics is the need for real world relevant learning experiences. Chris Tovani coined the phrase "fake reading" in her book *I Read It but I don't Get It* and then challenges all teachers to consider reading their mandate whatever the discipline, in a later publication, *Do I Have to Teach Reading?* Information about her books and videos can be found at Chris Tovani's website *http://www.tovanigroup.com/*

Adolescents also tend to lose interest in school just at the time when they start to develop the abilities to think and reason at higher levels. In his book *Puzzle Them First: Motivating Adolescent Readers with Question Finding,* A. Vincent Ciardiello presents a powerful way to make learning relevant and engaging for learners. Published by The International Reading Association this book is a goldmine of effective strategies and a valuable approach to addressing the needs of this special group of learners.
http://www.reading.org/publications/bbv/books/bk581/abstracts/bk581-2-Ciardiello.html

Learning Commons Connections: Keeping learning real world, relevant and engaging becomes easier when the world is at the finger tips of learners and teachers. There is no "fake work" in the Learning Commons.

Effective Student Questioning

For students to fully participate and thrive in this new 'learning age', they must be critical thinkers. Questioning is the base skill that makes all thinking purposeful. **Consequently intuitive questioning techniques are becoming essential learning tools**. Through the lens of effective questions students learn to be responsible and effective information users.

Questioning skills will help every student succeed with many kinds of information tasks including:

- Exploring a topic for research
- Developing a focus for research
- Accessing information
- Validating information sources
- Designing surveys and interviews
- Processing information
- Thinking critically about information
- Deeper understanding of issues
- Connecting to real world problems and events
- Critical analysis of media texts
- Self analysis and peer review

A practical professional text to kick start staff development on effective student questioning is *Q Tasks: How to empower students to ask questions and care about answers* by Carol Koechlin and Sandi Zwaan. Selected chapters may be viewed on-line at Stenhouse.
http://www.stenhouse.com/shop/pc/viewprd.asp?idProduct=9000&r=&REFERER=

Another valuable resource to keep pace with is the Question Mark www.questioning.org

Learning Commons Connections: Building a school wide climate conducive to inquiry is a key goal for the commons. Modeling and testing questioning strategies for all ages and disciplines is natural in this high stimulus environment.

Over to You. Discuss with Us at:http//schoollearningcommons.pbwiki.com

- What other connections to a Learning Commons concept do you recommend?