The Case for Collaboration

The single most important factor for successful school restructuring and the first order of business for those interested in increasing the capacity of their schools is building a collaborative internal environment.

(Eastwood & Seashore Louis, 1992)

When groups, rather than individuals, are seen as the main units for implementing curriculum, instruction, and assessment, they facilitate development of shared purpose for student learning and collective responsibility to achieve it.

(Newmann & Wehlage, 1995)

“The key to ensuring that every child has a quality teacher is finding a way for school systems to organize the work of qualified teachers so they can collaborate with their colleagues in developing strong learning communities that will sustain them as they become more accomplished teachers.”

—National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003, p. 7

Teacher collaboration in strong professional learning communities improves the quality and equity of student learning, promotes discussions that are grounded in evidence and analysis rather than opinion, and fosters collective responsibility for student success.

(McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006)

“High-performing schools tend to promote collaborative cultures [and] support professional communities and exchanges among all staff. . . . Teachers and staff communicate to remove barriers to student learning.”

—National Education Association, 2006
When teachers work in collaborative teams, schools are more likely to see gains in student achievement, find higher quality solutions to problems, promote increased confidence among staff, create an environment in which teachers support one another’s strengths and accommodate weaknesses, provide support for new teachers, and provide all staff with access to an expanded pool of ideas, materials, and methods.

(Little, 1990)

“(High-achieving schools) build a highly collaborative school environment where working together to solve problems and to learn from each other become cultural norms.”

—WestEd, 2000, p.12

Improving schools require a collaborative culture. Without collaborative skills and relationships, it is not possible to continue to learn.

(Fullan, 1993)

Collaboration and the ability to engage in collaborative action are becoming increasingly important to the survival of the public schools. Indeed, without the ability to collaborate with others, the prospect of truly improving schools is not likely.

(Schlechty, 2005, p. 22)

“It is imperative that professional learning be directed at improving the quality of collaborative work.”

—National Staff Development Council, 2001

It is time to end the practice of solo teaching in isolated classrooms. Today’s teachers must transform their personal knowledge into a collectively built, widely shared, and cohesive professional knowledge base.

(Fulton, Yoon, & Lee, 2005)