

Core Principles of the Collaborative Classroom

By Peter Brunn | Categories: Uncategorized

We are partners in the newly created Center for the Collaborative Classroom, a coalition of educators that brings together teachers, administrators, professors, and organizations around the common vision of nurturing the whole needs of our students. We believe that schools need to explicitly support both the child's head and heart. When they do, it ensures that our classroom and school communities meet the complete academic, social, emotional, and ethical needs of the children in our charge.

The work of the Center for the Collaborative Classroom is organized around four core principles. These principles are not meant to be a dogmatic set of rules, but rather serve as a set of beacons or guideposts around which educators can collaborate to craft lessons, plan professional development, and design resources.

Core principles of the Center for the Collaborative Classroom are:

- **We must actively create and support an inclusive, caring, and safe learning community.** We have learned through years of experience and careful reading of research that in order for students to be successful, they need to feel a “sense of connectedness” to school. They need to develop positive relationships with peers and teachers. By feeling safe, connected, and supported, students can then take the risks they need to take in order to grow and thrive. Additionally, teachers and other school staff need to work in the same sort of environment—one that makes them feel safe and supported.
- **We must integrate social and emotional learning into academic instruction.** Powerful teaching means incorporating authentic ways for students to collaborate so that they may grow ideas, deepen learning, and engage in intelligent discourse. Doing this requires that students develop the social skills that they need to interact with others in ways that foster meaningful learning. By integrating social development into core academic instruction, teachers ensure that social development does not get marginalized and pushed out of the school day. Instead it becomes integral to student learning and success.
- **Lessons must build on and support students’ intrinsic motivation.** Teachers can present great lessons and content, but in the end, the student decides what gets learned. This simple idea—that the learner is in charge of the learning—forms the centerpiece for the lessons and learning situations that students experience. We believe that classrooms need to be organized so that students are motivated to engage in the learning, with each other, and in the greater learning community.
- **Learning situations should center on students’ thinking and action.** We want students to be doing most of the talking, thinking, and action in our classrooms. We believe that learning experiences need to be constructed so that most of the classroom time is spent with students doing engaging and active work such as reading, writing, talking, drawing, and making things—not on teacher talk and presentation.

All the partners in the Center for the Collaborative Classroom encourage these principles to be shared as widely as possible with the hope of enlarging our community of like-minded educators. If these principles fit with how you see education unfolding in your classroom, school, or district, consider joining our community.