

# When One Plus One Does Not Equal Two

Communities of practice contribute to educators' professional learning and development by the collaborative power that emanates when combining the perceptions of multiple educators.



*“What’s wrong with the textbook that I’ve been using for nine years? My students pass their exams and move onto the next grade.”*

Getting through a textbook over the course of a school year is a goal for many teachers, as this is what they were hired to do. This textbook pattern eventually becomes instinctual. A few teachers set this goal because they worked long and hard in scrutinizing the textbook to determine if it is suitable for their students. The latter is rare, but easily identifiable; they will be the few you hear saying “is this good enough for my students?” instead of “will this get my students through the year?” Neither scenario is right or wrong, and the difference between the two exists cryptically.

Setting specific, quantifiable goals that are easy to measure is one way to ascertain one perception of how well students, teachers, and schools are performing. For example, a teacher may want all of their students to grow at least three percent in algebraic problem solving between October and November. At the student level, getting above 75% in each subject on their first-quarter progress report may be their main personal goal. Students and teachers can reach these goals can by memorizing definitions, answering multiple choice questions, or repeating math problems until they are blue in the face, but are reaching these goals providing children what they need to be successful when they enter the working world? Probably not. As teachers, we strive to help children expand their critical thinking skills and help build them into productive citizens.

## **Student Equity and Access**

When educator collaboration occurs within a community of practice in their school, they can share any aspect of instruction to add to consistency, thus increasing student equity and access. By communicating about the expectations for students, educators can create or modify policies and procedures to make them uniform on a school and classroom level. There are many students that need accommodations and modifications, and there are many diverse learners outside of those documents. Addressing students' individual needs in a group emulates consistency and understanding for the student.

## **Influence on instructional quality and learning outcomes**

It is understandable that many veteran teachers are hesitant to change their instructional practices that they have seen proven success with. However, have they asked themselves "have more effective practices emerged that may be more beneficial to my students?" These thoughts may not come to mind based on the mindset of "why fix something that isn't broken?" With no limit to the types of communities of practice that exist, collaboration within these communities can lead to positive educational change through many facets. My favorite account of a community of practice is when teachers at a school that teach different subjects to the same students get together to create cross-curricular projects that help students grow their critical thinking skills by using metacognition to link the subjects together while also applying them to real current or past events.

## **Curriculum-based professional learning**

"High quality instructional materials and curriculum-based professional learning can improve student achievement and increase students' access to learning opportunities." (Short and Hirsh, 2023). Curriculum-based professional learning may be the conception that sheds light on how new or improved curriculum can benefit students and teachers, resulting in more positivity and more effective communication throughout the entire school. Teachers should take advantage of the constructive and collaborative nature of communities of practice by applying it to their curriculum. Professional development and ongoing learning help educators keep up with ways to digitize and globalize, and to use all levels of thinking. There are many areas for teachers to improve or change their curriculum and instruction to align with current societal standards. Since there are so many methods of communication these days, it is possible for educators to be a part of communities that have multi-faceted ways to make positive educational change.

## **References**

Short, J. B., & Hirsh, S. (2023). Transforming teaching through curriculum-based professional\_learning. Corwin. [https://bibliu.com/app/#/view/books/9781071886304/epub/OEBPS/s9781071886281.i27.html#page\\_viii](https://bibliu.com/app/#/view/books/9781071886304/epub/OEBPS/s9781071886281.i27.html#page_viii)