

# KLSD Learning Cafe

Intellectual Engagement in the Classroom

April 18, 2018

# What is a Learning Café?

- ❖ A community conversation on a complex issue
- ❖ Structured to include many voices
- ❖ Two-way sharing of information & understanding
- ❖ Provides District with feedback for further reflection

# Structure of a Learning Café?

- ❖ 3 Sets of questions
- ❖ 3 Rounds of conversation - different groups each time
- ❖ Opportunity to share out between rounds
- ❖ Note takers at each table so the District holds on to the conversations, the thinking, and the feedback

# Table Facilitators

- Lisbeth Arce
- Laura Atwell
- Kim Buckley
- Linda Burke
- Jennifer Cocuzzo
- Julie Evans-Kaser
- Tricia Forde
- Jackie Kovatch
- Judy McBride

# Katonah-Lewisboro Learning Commitment

*In the KLSD, we will strive to create learning experiences for all students that are **engaging, relevant**, and take place in an **active learning environment**.*

What do **intellectually engaging** experiences look like? How do we ensure that we are encouraging student curiosity, providing an individually appropriate level of challenge, moving towards increasing levels of independence, and offering effective feedback?

What are **relevant** learning experiences? How do we ensure that lessons have purpose beyond test results and make recognizable connections to the lives of our students?

What is an **active learning environment**? How do we ensure that all students participate in collaborative, problem/project based activities that foster creativity, critical thinking, and increasingly sophisticated communication?

# Round One - Scenario

Background: Your child is in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. She has always done well in school (A's and B's) and has been generally happy and social in and out of school. Since the start of this school year, there has been no communication from school that would make you think anything has changed. Nothing at home has caused any concern.

Tonight: Your daughter arrives at the dinner table looking glum. You ask, "What's wrong?" "Nothing" is the initial response. After some prodding, she says, "School is stupid. It's a total waste of time. I've decided that, starting tonight, I'm never doing any homework, ever again, and I don't care if I fail everything. I'm done."

# Round One - At Your Table....

Arrive at three possible parent responses to the scenario, with a rationale for why each would be an effective response.



# Sharing out



Why the focus on intellectual engagement,  
and why now?

Schools today are more focused on academic and social skills and a little less focused on recallable content knowledge.

Skill development requires a higher degree of meaningful engagement than does short term recall.

According to researchers Sheldon and Biddle (1998)


- Literature now documents the relative advantages of intrinsic motivation
- Although externally-motivated persons can demonstrate impressive feats of short-term, rote learning, intrinsically motivated learners retain such rote material longer, demonstrate a stronger understanding of both rote and more complex material, and demonstrate greater creativity and cognitive flexibility
- Intrinsically-motivated persons are more wholly engaged and absorbed in their activities, bringing more of their previous knowledge and integrative capacities to bear in their pursuit of new understanding and mastery

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/policy-priorities/feb02/num28/Motivating-Students-to-Learn.aspx>

What do we mean when we say  
“intellectual engagement”?

In an intellectually engaging environment, learners....

- Explain the connectedness of new concepts to prior knowledge and underlying principles
- Make connections among disciplines, to themselves, and to the world
- Engage in productive, cognitive struggle to solve authentic problems and construct meaning
- Develop their own questions and interact productively with other learners
- Increase their interest and their motivation to learn more
- Have respect for other learners and feel respected as learners
- Feel comfortable taking intellectual risks



Intellectual engagement is an absorbing, creatively energized focus resulting in a deep personal commitment to exploration, investigation, problem-solving and inquiry over a sustained period of time.

Jacobsen. M., Lock. J., & Friesen, S. (2013). Strategies for Engagement: Knowledge building and intellectual engagement in participatory learning environments. *Education Canada*.

# If the benefits are so obvious, why is this not an overnight transition?

- Mandated content
- Content not matching student interest
- Varying levels of student interest & varied student interests
- Presumed needs around content coverage & pacing/efficiency
- There is an optimal level of challenge (for optimal engagement) and it varies by student
- Assessments have not kept up with what we know about how/why students learn.
- Educational research & practice hasn't always supported the desire for an intellectually engaging environment
- Time is finite



# What happens when we're not intellectually engaged?

In surface learning:

- Knowledge is treated as discrete bits of information that can be acquired, often through memorization, without making connections to prior knowledge
- Learners view learning as a process of reproducing what has been transmitted to them and replicating simple procedures
- This leads to “fragile,” or “inert” knowledge, which is likely to collect dust in the attic of the mind, unconnected to learners' lives in meaningful ways

## Round Two - Table Questions

What value do you see in this kind of thinking about school experiences?

How is this thinking consistent or inconsistent with your view of the world our students are growing up into?

# Sharing out



The background of the slide features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of purple and blue, primarily concentrated on the right side and bottom, creating a modern, layered effect.

As our teachers talk ...

What are you wondering about?

What more do you want to know?

## Round Three - Table Questions

Have you received any feedback from your children about any of the practices described tonight?

What excites you about these changes?

What worries you?

# Sharing out:



# Learning Cafes????

What are your thoughts about these cafes?

How do we attract more people?

What are the right topics?

Thank you for joining us tonight!



We look forward to our next Learning Café!

