Learners working in communities or teams expand their knowledge and grow their learning skills through collaborating, cooperating, communicating, peer-assessing, and peer-mentoring.

Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

> *In 1985 when we were running POINT FIVE workshops, there were often a limited number of computers, so the workshop facilitators often paired two faculty members on a single computer. We observed that faculty moved more quickly and effectively through the workshop content when they worked in pairs than when they worked alone because in pairs, they taught each other. In student demonstrations, the results were much more positive when students worked in teams of three or four than in pairs. A specific instance springs to mind: At Albertson's College in Idaho, we scheduled a student workshop on a Saturday morning with about 10 faculty members watching an experiment. We grouped the 11 students into four teams (three 3-person teams and a single 2-person team). After ten minutes, the 2-person team was significantly behind the other teams in points so we moved a person from the top performing team to the 2-person team. Within about 10 minutes, the new 2-person team went from first place to last place. This off-the-cuff experiment was repeated several times, and always gave the same results. This led to the decision that Pacific Crest would strive to consistently use cooperative learning in its workshops and institutes so that faculty could experience the positive impact of working cooperatively.* (Dan Apple, personal recollection).

The knowledge and experience gained from the second annual Problem Solving Across the Curriculum Conference helped to strengthen the understanding of and commitment to collaborative learning practices for many attendees especially after Karl Smith's plenary session on cooperative learning (PSAC 1991). Shortly thereafter, a cooperative learning model was presented in *Cooperative Learning* (Duncan-Hewitt, Mount & Apple 1994), highlighting both the strengths and drawbacks of practicing cooperative learning for all potential stakeholders: learners, learning teams, facilitators, and an educational system. In *A Handbook on Cooperative Learning*, the same authors focus on how to design teams and team activities, the role of journal writing, and tips for facilitating cooperative learning (1996). The *Faculty Guidebook* also offers a set of cooperative learning resources. The fundamental principles of and steps for incorporating cooperative learning are shared in the module *Cooperative Learning* (Van Der Ker & Burke, 2007; see Figure 1). The module *Teamwork Methodology* (Smith, Baehr, & Krumsieg, 2007) helps faculty facilitate the team building process, with *Designing Teams and Assigning Roles* (Smith, 2007) providing more narrowly focused information about the use of roles in teaming activities. Finally, *Team Reflection* (Hare, 2007) provides methods that faculty can use to help increase productivity for learning teams.

Figure 1 Steps for Incorporating a Cooperative Learning Activity

1. Provide background information and content that is necessary for discussing the activity.
2. Form groups in meaningful ways and identify physical space for each group.
3. Present the activity.
4. Determine group roles.
5. Facilitate during and after the activity.
6. Process the experience with the students.

Learning Communities (Student & Professional)

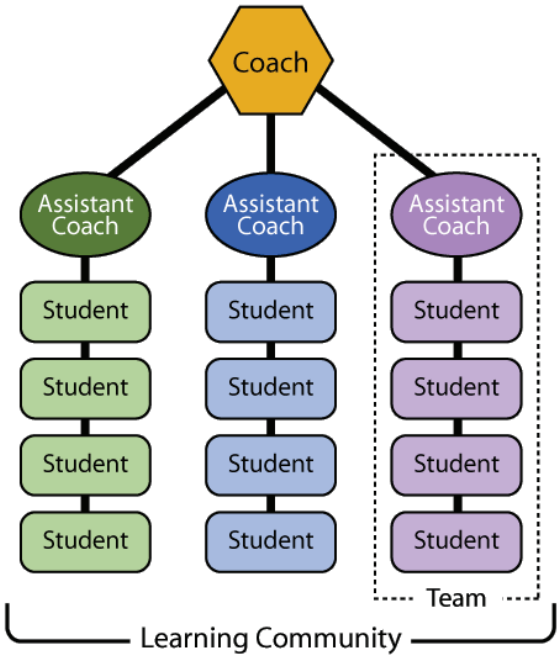
Learning communities, defined as an intentional restructuring of curriculum around a cohort of courses or a context in which students engage in cooperative learning activities, all tend to demonstrate cohesion of a group with commitment to a collaborative environment and shared learning outcomes (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990; Ashe & Romero, 2007). While we most often think of learning communities as being comprised of students, there are highly effective professional learning communities consisting of faculty and staff who also reap the benefits of commitment to collaboration and shared learning outcomes.

At Kirkwood Community College, for example, a three-year project focused on using process learning together with cooperative learning involved the creation of a professional learning community of faculty members. The members of this community helped one another improve their performances in the areas of active learning, cooperative learning, assessment, and curriculum design. This project is effectively described in *Taking the Helm: Targeting Student Learning* (Klopp, 1996). Similarly, the University of Idaho, supported by an NSF grant, developed

a professional community that counted members across multiple institutions, all of whom were focused on improving teaching and learning through the practice of mentoring (Utschig, Elger, & Beyerlein, 2005).

The benefits of a learning community structure were realized as the size of the Learning to Learn Camps increased, with students assigned to learning teams within learning communities (Pacific Crest, 2015a; see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Learning to Learn Camp Structure

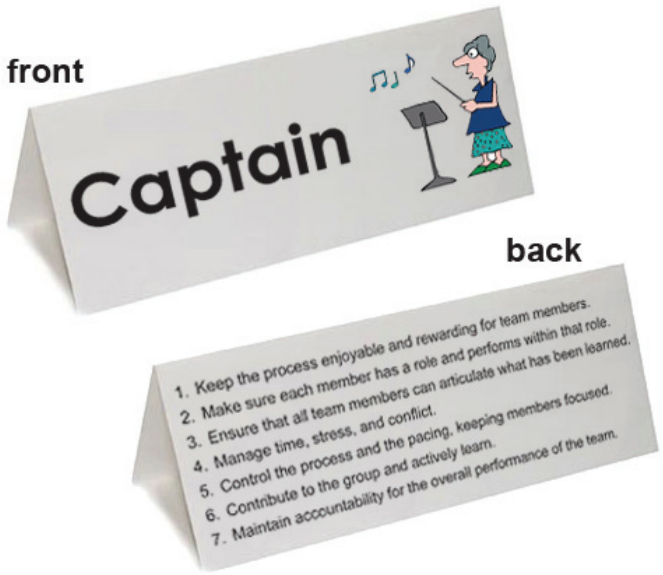


An early example of a student-based learning community within a first-year program is seen in the implementation by St. Augustine College of a learning community program that assigned mentors to a learning community of 32 first-year students (Knowles, 1995). An advanced example of a learning community structure is found at Stony Brook University, where learning communities are simply how students are organized for many courses in order to provide a stronger first-year experience (Hanson & Heller, 2009).

Tools for Advancing Teams and Community Membership

The years between 1995 and 2015 saw the creation of numerous additional resources to support learning communities and teams, both cooperative teams with assigned roles as well as more loosely collaborative teams. Cooperative team tools include the team role markers designed at Sinclair Community College in 1998, as ways to help students learn and perform assigned roles more quickly and to help faculty members facilitate teams more effectively (Sinclair Community College 1998; see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Sample Role Marker



Additional cooperative and collaborative team tools were available in the *Learning Assessment Journals* (editions 1 – 4) (Carroll, Beyerlein, Ford, & Apple, 1997) and now appear as part of the *Student Success Toolbox* (Pacific Crest, 2011): Reflector's Report, Recorder's Report, Weekly Recorder's Report, Weekly Reflector's Report, Spokesperson's Report, Planner's Report, SII Team Assessment, and a Profile of a Strong Team Player. The expanded online *Student Success Toolbox* (available to adopting instructors) also includes the Teamwork Methodology and Rubric for Performing in a Team (Pacific Crest, 2015b).

Actual learning activities geared toward building teamwork and community membership skills are found in *Foundations of Learning* (4th ed.) (Redfield & Hurley-Lawrence, 2009) and include activity 1.1 Building Learning Communities, 12.1 Exploring Team Roles, 12.2 Team Logo Competition, and 12.3 Team Design Competition. A slightly different approach to growing teamwork and community skills appears in "Experience 8: Performing in Teams and Within a Community" from *Learning to Learn: Becoming a Self-Grower* (Apple, Morgan & Hintze, 2013); it integrates many of the tools and expertise/best practices already noted. The content of this learning experience includes the following:

- **DISCOVERY EXERCISE** Using the Holistic Rubric for Performing in a Team, perform an assessment of your learning team for the last team-based activity. Use the **SII team assessment worksheet** contained in this activity.
- **EXPLORATION QUESTIONS** These prompt students to consider times when teams and participation in them were fundamental to what

they were doing, answering questions focused on team success, feeling like part of a team, roles that were effective or ineffective, the importance of common goals, and common practices that can improve teamwork. Students then answer the same questions, this time with respect to a community and membership in it, instead of a team.

- **TEAM DESIGN COMPETITION** Teams design and build a tower using paper and tape; they then report on the teaming aspect of the activity, using the reflectors' and recorders' reports, and answering a series of critical thinking questions about the roles and efficacy of their team as they worked on their tower.
- **PROBLEM** Students select one team and one community of which they are a member and identify areas in which they feel that they are not contributing enough value. They are prompted to perform a formal SII self-assessment of their performance, using the Holistic Rubric for Performing in a Team. They then answer one of two questions: 1) How important is it to understand every team role so that you can play your role more effectively by helping others play their roles more effectively? OR 2) What makes a community effective, and what obligations do community members have to help strengthen their communities?
- **MY LIFE VISION** The final prompt for this experience asks each student to write a minimum of two pages either analyzing a community he or she came from or describing the type of community he or she wishes to be part of in the future.

Team and community learning has become an integral part of Process Education learning environments, with practitioners striving to make the techniques, tools, and processes that support learning communities ever more effective.

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