

60 minutes to a New Learning Community

1. GETTING FOCUSED **TIME:** About 5 minutes

Read through these instructions, then take some time to do some thinking and "free-writing" in response to the following task: If you had the opportunity to teach in some sort of learning community format, what THEME or THEMES might intrigue you? Ways to get started: what larger meaningful interdisciplinary questions, issues, ideas or problems might be intriguing for you and for students to explore?

2. INTRODUCTIONS : What you might not know about me...

TIME: About 10 minutes

First, briefly describe the interests that grow out of your expertise and passions – interests that are both intriguing to you, and might be intriguing to students today.

Second, share the potential themes you listed for item 1.

3. TOGETHER, CHOOSE A THEME for your learning community.

TIME: About 5-10 minutes

Once you and your partners combined your lists of potential themes, see if you can come to a consensus on any common theme, question, or topic that might serve as the organizing idea for a learning community.

4. FLESH OUT THE THEME & ACTIVITIES

TIME: About 25 minutes

Given a semester in which you and your partner/s were teaching collaboratively around this theme, what might you and your students do? Brainstorm with your partner/s in order to flesh out the substance of the theme – that is, GENERATE particular sub-themes, concepts, authors or titles of texts (reading of primary sources is encouraged!), films, field experiences, dramatic performances or research projects which might illustrate the THEME. **No need to prioritize or to lock in a sequence at this stage.** Generate as many ideas as you can.

5. MAKE A SUMMARY OF YOUR WORK

TIME: last 10 minutes

Distill and summarize some of the key ideas or activities in your learning community design that might underpin a real program. Make sure your summary page includes at least some of the following:

- A title that portrays a theme
- Major concepts and learning activities
- Key student learning experiences
- Possible embedded course or program objectives

Set a date to continue with this planning with your partners.

Take a moment to complete the workshop evaluation.

Designing Integrated Learning for Students

The foundation of some of the most powerful learning communities is a “conceptual framework” that guides the overall structure of the community. This intellectual common ground can be in the form of a set of questions, embedded in a real problem, or may be in the form of some key concepts.

When you first start planning, it is often very helpful to explore the issues, questions, ideas and problems that are on your mind, on the minds of your colleagues, and, as you best can predict, on the minds of your students. So, as you think about your disciplines, your students, your own life experiences, what larger interdisciplinary questions, issues, ideas or problems might be intriguing for you and for students to explore?”

Second, take a moment to reflect on your own powerful experiences of learning at any age, either inside or outside school. Based on an experience that first comes to mind, do a “quick write” on an index card, noting what you learned. Share *brief* accounts of these experiences with your teaching partner/s. Identify key points/common threads and write these down.