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Collaboration Nation Study – Calling all Educators!

by JORDAN LIPPMAN on NOVEMBER 14, 2016

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Calling all Educators: Join the #CollaborationNation

Over the past few decades, we have seen an ongoing increase in collaborative teamwork skills as a job requirement in job descriptions (Plucker, Kennedy, & Dilley, 2015). These “soft” skills are critical to success in the modern workplace (not to mention the world we live in, in general).

The most authoritative research synthesis to date, edited by Dr. James W. Pellegrino and Dr. Margaret L. Hilton, argues that while much is known about how to promote the

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learning of cognitive and academic skills through “Deeper Learning” approaches, far less is known about how to promote learning of non-cognitive skills such as collaboration ([Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012](#)).

Enter “Collaboration Nation”

With the above in mind, we introduce ... the **Collaboration Nation research effort** (found on line at www.CollaborationNation.io). “This study will provide practitioners and researchers with much needed information about how educators are approaching collaboration skill instruction,” according to Dr. Pellegrino, an advisory board member of the #CollaborationNation study.

To achieve their full potential as adults, students as young as elementary school can begin to develop 21st Century Skills through Project Based Learning (PBL) and other pedagogical techniques. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) is one of the leading advocates of 21st Century Skills and a proud partner of the Collaboration Nation study. According to David Ross, the new Chief Executive Officer of P21, “collaboration skills are very much like writing skills – they do not develop naturally. Educators must be very purposeful in how they prepare students so that everyone can benefit from group work. We are very excited to learn about the creative ways that teachers approach this challenging work. But, for this study to have maximum impact, we need to hear from as many educators as possible.”

With purposeful preparation for collaboration and highly engaging projects that adhere to the Gold Standards for PBL ([Larmer & Mergendoller, 2015](#)), students are able to develop thinking skills, content knowledge, and social and emotional competencies.

Teaching Team Work to Young Students

Melissa Unger teaches STEAM to first and second graders in a project-based classroom in Western Pennsylvania. “One of the goals in my classroom is to teach students the importance of working together.” Her challenge is to teach collaboration to young students, which is difficult in first and second grade, because students often struggle with abstract concepts. Unger has her students work collaboratively in groups of two to five students on various projects. She breaks down the project and has the students stop periodically to consider other student’s ideas and their own thoughts.

Unger explains,

“Over time, students learn the value of working in a team and learning from others. As students become better at working together, projects become more student-driven, rather than teacher-driven. This gives me more time to observe students’ interactions and think more deeply about instructional decisions.”

After each group project, students reflect on their group participation, and are informally assessed on their collaboration. “But,” says Unger, “right now, there is limited guidance on how to measure collaboration skills of my young students.”

Towards Better Collaboration Skills Assessment Models

Luckily, ESSA is breathing new life into the 21st Century Skills movement. This legislation is fueling the search for alternative assessments of student learning (c.f., [Darling-Hammond, Bae, Cook-Harvey, et al., 2016](#)). Study partners like the [Council for Aid to Education](#), advocate for the use of performance assessments as a way to measure what is learned from collaborative PBL experiences. The Collaboration Nation study will help identify alternative assessments of collaboration skills that educators may be already be using.

[CollaborationNation.io](http://www.CollaborationNation.io) is a national study of collaboration instruction and assessment in schools. This important work is being conducted by mission-driven organizations who believe in the power of collaboration. Dr. Jordan Lippman, study director, exclaims: “I am

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so excited to be partnering with some amazing, like-minded organizations to conduct this study.

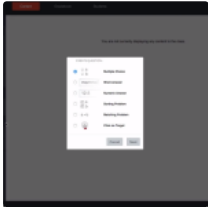
In addition to EmergingEdTech, Collaboration Nation partners include:

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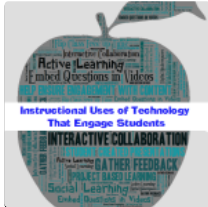
K-12 teachers and curriculum directors – please join the Collaboration Nation by participating in a SHORT survey at collaborationnation.io.



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About Jordan Lippman
 Jordan is the Director of the Collaboration Nation study. Jordan earned a PhD in Cognitive Psychology with an emphasis in Statistics and Learning Sciences. After a brief time doing research and teaching at Carnegie Mellon University, he was awarded a Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh's prestigious Learning Research and Development Center. Since leaving academia, Jordan founded ISA Learning, Inc., a Benefit Corporation that builds collaboration skills within groups of students, classrooms, schools and communities through engaging, research-based professional development that is offered in-person, online, and in blended formats.

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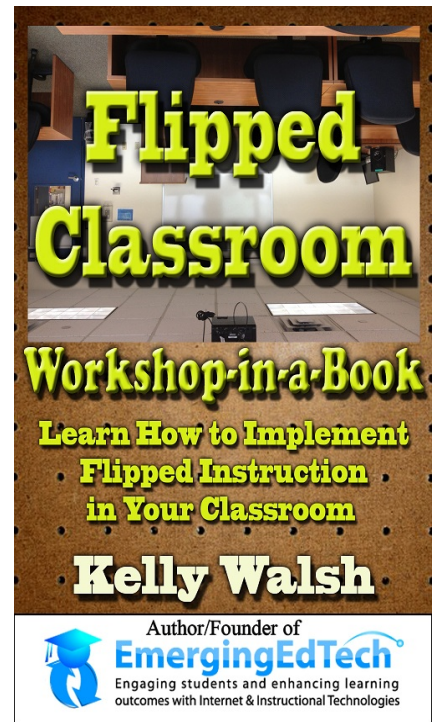
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