

Beyond differences:  
Building bridges and creating a community of learners.

Hands on activity - UDL - everyone choose a piece of lego, when they contribute to the discussion they add a piece to the “bridge” in the middle. This will give a visual of “bridge-building” (everyone’s lego piece is unique, just like their contribution, we need each other.)

Learning Community - definition - how can we define this term?

“...simply labeling a group as a community neither ensures that it functions as one, nor that it is a beneficial, cohesive unit in which learning will take place readily” “  
Riel & Polin

*Please discuss.*

Riel & Polin (2004)

*3 unique forms of learning that overlap. These are task-based, practice-based and knowledge-based. Who would like to guess at the description for each form?*

**Task-based:** groups of people working together intently over a limited period on a particular product. Focus is often on diversity of experience to solve particular, challenging problems through collaboration. Participation is often mandatory, for example as part of a course, and the output a one-off (not meant for further revision).

**Practice-based:** usually based around a profession or discipline, these groups focus on sharing and developing good practice. Participation is usually voluntary. The focus is on knowledge in use rather than on the process of knowledge development. The group is dynamic and lives through several generations of members. Products (stories, procedures, routines, etc) represent work in progress, the reification of the group's knowledge and are meant for further revision.

**Knowledge-based:** here the focus is on the use and reuse of knowledge in a never ending cycle, as proposed by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) and Brown and Duguid (1991). Products are produced only so far as necessary to express the current state of thinking and to help the dialogue and knowledge development to continue through further cycles. As such reports are meant to invite comment and

revision. In such communities, there is considerable focus on the process of knowledge development and group collaboration.

*Learning community is a commitment to ongoing development of teachers by creating a space, a literal and theoretical space where this learning can take place. It requires personal reflection, direction and desire. It is inspired by the individual and environment in which they work.*

What are some elements needed to turn a community into a learning community?

**Required elements include:**

a collegial environment of trust;  
inquiry,  
reflection  
research;  
flexible leadership roles for teachers;  
learning content in context;  
participation in networks,  
collaborations  
partnerships.

It's a small world. How are some ways (practically, in a school environment) to build bridges with the world around us...to bring it closer??

**Conclusion/Summary:**

Building bridges is all about finding common ground, respecting differences, learning from each other.