



## Collaborative Inquiry

	What it is	What it is not
1	a high-quality professional learning design	experimental research design
2	a cyclical and iterative process for improving student learning and teaching practices	linear or lock step a checklist of actions
3	based on issues related to the learning needs of the students of the participating educators	based on topics that determined/prioritized by someone other than the classroom educator
4	driven by a central question - in which the answer is unknown to participants	based on a topic mandated by administrators or central office staff
5	adaptive in nature as new knowledge is generated amongst team members	the transmission of knowledge from central office personnel or outside experts
6	steered in a direction determined by participants	directed by outside experts
7	facilitated from within - by members of the team	facilitated by outside experts
8	decisions are informed by evidence, research on promising practices, and/or the advice of experts	'cherry picking' teaching approaches
9	the deep implementation of new and different approaches to classroom instruction	more of the same while expecting different results
10	gathering a variety of evidence - collectively examined at multiple points (not excluding pre-test, post-test data)	pre-test, post-test data - examined at the beginning and end of the semester or at the beginning and end of the school year
11	a mindset - a way of thinking - a belief that what we do matters and that we need to evaluate the effects of our actions on student learning and achievement	a mindset - a way of thinking - a belief that no matter what we do, we can not reach all students - having no appreciation for self-assessment
12	risky, rewarding, empowering	risk-free nor unhelpful
13	sometimes a 'muddy' process	a clearly laid out path

Donohoo, J., & Velasco, M. (2016). *The Transformative Power of Collaborative Inquiry: Realizing Change in Schools and Classrooms*. Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, CA.

**Potential Pitfalls of Collaboration:** There are a number of pitfalls that can occur when educators come together to collaborate. Have you or your team fallen victim to one or more of the pitfalls? Share your experience with others at your table. Use the space at the bottom of the table to describe one or two pitfalls of your own.

Pitfall	Definition
<b>Diffusion of Responsibility</b> (Katz, Earl, & Ben Jaafar, 2009)	This happens when teachers are <i>less</i> likely to take responsibility because they are in the presence of others rather than working alone. Essentially, people are less likely to assume responsibility if they believe that someone else might do so.
<b>Cascade Effect</b> (Sustain & Hastie, 2015)	This happens when team members follow the statements and actions of those who spoke first or acted first, even if those statements and actions lead the group in the unfortunate or wrong direction.
<b>Culture of Nice</b> (MacDonald, 2011)	Polite conversations remain superficially focused on sharing stories of practice rather than probing more deeply into issues related to learning and teaching. Sustain and Hastie (2015) refer to this as ‘happy talk’. Technical questions are asked but more critical questions about how approaches are impacting students’ understandings or what evidence the teacher has to support a claim of effectiveness are avoided.
<b>Lack of Evidence-Based Dialogue</b> (Nelson, Deuel, Slavit, & Kennedy, 2010)	Educators are inexperienced with evidence-based dialogue. Every student deserves a years’ growth for a years’ input however, when teachers do engage in discussion about student results, it is often framed in reference to <i>achievement</i> rather than <i>progress</i> . Also, teachers’ observations of student learning are often shared in general terms rather than specifics and often observations are unsupported by evidence (e.g. “The students were much more engaged”).
<b>Contrived Collegiality</b> (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012)	‘Bureaucratic’ type procedures that are put into place to increase joint planning and other forms of working together. Administrative contrivances that get collegiality going in schools where little or none existed before. However, when imposed with degrees of inflexibility become artificial and short-lived.
<b>We Don’t Want to Expose our Vulnerabilities</b> (Katz & Dack, 2013)	Educators want others to see only their strengths and not their weaknesses. As a result, teachers keep their questions to themselves. They also feel a need to appear knowledgeable and that sometimes manifests itself in a stubbornness around ‘being right.’
<b>Polarization</b> (Sustain & Hastie, 2015)	This happens when teams end up in more extreme positions in line with the pre-deliberation tendencies of their members – for example when a group included toward cynicism becomes more cynical as a result of internal discussions.
<b>Quality Control</b> (Katz, Earl, & Ben Jaafar, 2009)	Ideas spread when educators collaborate. However, when assumptions are left unquestioned and strategies are not based on evidence, sometimes ideas not worthy of sharing become widely spread.

<b>Reflection for Facilitators</b>	
<b>Facilitator Skills and Approaches</b>	<b>Plus/Delta</b>
1. Builds in norm of discomfort within a safe environment.	
2. Ensures all voices are heard.	
3. Regularly builds in habit of reflection.	
4. Keeps equity and student achievement at the forefront.	
5. Seeks public commitment for action when appropriate.	
6. Helps group develop the habit of making controversy public.	
7. Values and uses awareness of group development.	
8. Builds mutual accountability and is accountable to group.	
9. Engages group in reflection regarding values and practice.	
10. Adjusts time as needed.	
11. Uses participant experiences, work samples, dilemmas as material for examination.	
12. Uses varied and appropriate structures to maximize participation and ensure that all voices are heard.	
13. Persists in the face of group discomfort – focuses on it during reflective periods.	
14. Addresses conflict when it arises.	
15. Is transparent about reasoning behind many decisions made by facilitator.	
16. Maintains norms.	
17. Is a good listener/good questioner.	
18. Is assertive about the need for facilitation in effective groups.	
19. Helps others assume leadership and facilitation roles.	
20. Transparently solicits feedback on facilitation.	

Adapted from: National School Reform Faculty: New York: Facilitation Standards