Read and Reflect

Katz and Earl (2007) note that collaboration is significant in building networks and professional learning communities. Although it is important to maintain relationships as they are the 'connective tissue' of the organisation, it is the capacity of educators to engage in professional dialogue typified by **investigation**, **debate** and **problem solving** which makes for a collaborative learning culture. These interactions result in improving one's own practice and that of the profession. They refer to the four-fold taxonomy developed by Judith Warren Little as being helpful when reflecting on the nature of collaboration within teams.

'In Storytelling and Scanning for Ideas *the contacts are informal and teachers make occasional forays in search of specific ideas, solutions and reassurances. They gain information and affirmation in the quick exchange of stories, casual camaraderie, and friendships that occur at a distance from the classroom. In this case, teachers do not feel as if there are any problems to be resolved and they exercise personal preference with whom they talk and how they use information.*

Aid and assistance *occurs when mutual aid or help is readily available. Questions are interpreted as requests for help and there is the expectation that colleagues will give one another help and/or advice, as well as concern and sympathy, but not interfere with one another's work in unwarranted ways. Sometimes the expression of empathy even has the potential to dissuade teachers from more analytic examinations of practice.*

In sharing *of methods, materials and ideas and opinions, people make aspects of their work accessible to others and explore their ideas and intentions with one another. This kind of sharing does not usually extend to commentary on curriculum, learning and instruction.*

Joint work*, as Warren Little describes, involves 'encounters among teachers that rest on shared responsibility for the work of teaching, with their motivation to participate grounded in needing each other's contributions in order to succeed in their own work and a confidence in others' competence and commitment. It is the kind of collaboration where ideas are put on the table for discussion, analysis, challenge and debate, in the service of a better way.'*

Katz, S & Earl, L. (2007) Creating New Knowledge: Evaluating Networked Learning Communities. In *Education Canada* Vol 47, No 1. Canadian Education Association.