

Collaboration Confirmed Okay
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For many, teaching in today's classroom has returned to the days when the teacher shut the door in the morning and didn't see her colleagues until a hallway trip to a special, or at best, in the faculty lounge. Conversations about students and curriculum are now seldom centered on a joint mission but rather segregated instruction. Because of the great push to teach the standards and increase test scores, teachers fear attempting creative integrated projects because of loosing time on task. But guess what, collaboration is back in vogue! This summer the Pennsylvania Department of Education held a Governor's Institute for Information Literacy and Reading in the Middle and Secondary Schools. Over 200 teachers, administrators, and librarians met for a week in July at Susquehanna University to study the student benefits of collaborative learning.

In the body of research professional educators received at the Institute, a study completed in 1999 by Keith Curry Lance from the State Library of Colorado concluded that students in schools with strong library programs and cooperative public libraries have increased test scores by fifteen points. Most importantly, what the attendees at the Institute discovered was that the PA Academic standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening correlate almost exactly with the AASL Information Literacy Standards, or Library Curriculum Standards. With this knowledge of the overlapping goals of the library specialist and the classroom teacher, the doors of the isolated classroom are free to open once again in order to provide students with the wider, richer learning environments they deserve.

As part of their acceptance into the Institute for Information Literacy and Reading, educators were required to develop integrated units of instruction to use in their schools (many great units were compiled during this focused week of collaboration!) Educators were also required to create an In-Service Action Plan in order to present the information they acquired at the Institute to other teachers when they return to their districts. Accessing information through Power Library, utilizing Information Literacy Models, and applying reading strategies to organize information are just a few of the valuable skills that the educators have to share. If you would like to learn more about the productive results of this Governor's Institute, or how to access collaborative ideas between your subject areas and the Library Information Specialist, see the Institute's website at www.key-line.ws.

One of the top ten benefits of collaboration as defined by Winer and Ray in the publication "Collaborative Lessons Learned" is that "students are more involved in learning, and their work is more creative as a result." Through the Institute, the Pennsylvania Department of Education provided educators with the opportunity to reevaluate what is needed to challenge and develop our students into life-long learners. They confirmed that to be successful in that process, collaborating with the library professionals in our districts and communities and utilizing the broad knowledge base of many resource individuals is not only okay but vital.