

Collaborative Inquiry: From Text to Practice

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What is Collaborative Inquiry (CI)?

Some educators who have experienced collaborative inquiry describe it as “a journey, an invitation to explore professional wonderings and questions. Choosing to embark on this journey means preparing to examine existing practices and assumptions.” (from Collaborative Inquiry in Ontario: What We Have Learned and Where We Are Now; read more about Collaborative Inquiry here:

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/CBS_CollaborativeInquiry.pdf)

CI is a method by which educators can research, analyze and reflect on common challenges in their schools in a way that can lead directly to changes designed to improve student learning within the local school community.

We are providing these resources to help PRSSP Schools link Collaborative Inquiry to Judaism’s historic legacy of *havruta* learning through introductory study of brief Torah, Rabbinic and contemporary texts.

We suggest learning these texts with members of your school’s faculty who don’t teach PRSSP classes. Study can be conducted in pairs so that participants engage in *havruta* learning, even as they develop greater understanding of how to maximize the potential of *havruta*. Note how layers of interpretation tend to deepen understanding and apply understanding to practice. Have learners raise questions and interpretations of their own, but also direct them to answer the following two questions as they read the sources:

- 1) Why is “facing each other” important?
- 2) What are the qualities of conversation and collaboration that these texts find to be desirable and why?

<p><u>1. Exodus 25:18-20</u> And you shall make two <i>cherubim</i> And the cherubim shall spread out their wings on high, screening the ark-cover with their wings, with their faces one to another.</p>	<p><u>שמות כה:יח-כ</u> ועשית שנים כרבים..... והיו הכרובים פרשי כנפים למעלה, סככים בכנפיהם על-הכפורת, ופניהם איש אל-אחיו.</p>
<p><u>2. Ba'al HaTurim, Exodus 25:20</u> ‘Their faces one to another’- like two friends discussing Torah.</p>	<p><u>בעל הטורים, שמות כה:כ</u> ופניהם איש אל-אחיו- כמו שני חברים שנושאין ונותנין בדברי תורה” (שמות כה: יח).</p>

3. Imrey Da'at, Trumah, Rabbi Meir Segal

And 'it is by two Torah scholars discussing words of Torah'- in a modest way, where each one perceives himself as a student learning from his friend, that truth comes out. And how beloved are such wise people like this before the Holy One, Blessed Be He, that they were set to be the model image of the Cherubim that stood above the Holy Ark in the Holy of Holies.

ר' מאיר סגל, אמרי דעת, פר' תרומה עמ' ס'

וע"י ששני תלמידי חכמים נושאים ונותנים בדברי תורה בדרך ענוה שכל אחד מחזיק את עצמו כתלמיד להתלמד מדברי חבירו, יוצא הדין אמת לאמיתו, ועד כמה חביבים חכמים כאלו לפני הקב"ה עד שנקבע להיות דוגמת תמונתם הכרובים עומדים על ארון הקודש בקדשי הקדשים.

4. Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 63a

R. Jeremiah said in the name of R. Simeon b.

Lakish:

When two *talmidey chachamim* (lit. students of the wise) are amiable to each other in [their discussions in] *halachah*,

Rashi: 'giving and taking' on the matter in a gentle manner, engaging in order to learn from one another.

The Holy One, blessed be He, listens to them.

תלמוד בבלי שבת סג ע"א

אמר רבי ירמיה אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש: שני תלמידי חכמים הנוחין זה לזה בהלכה רש"י- נושאים ונותנים בה בנחת רוח, מתעסקין כדי שילמדו זה מזה הקדוש ברוך הוא מקשיב להן.



5. Susan Coleman and Yaron Prywes, “Teaching Conflict Resolution Skills in a Workshop”, in Coleman, Deutsch and Marcus (eds.) The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice 3rd ed., Jossey-Bass, 2014, p. 873.

A school approached me... to facilitate improvements in teacher pedagogy to enhance student achievement. The client recognized that there might be differences among faculty, including different teacher and administrator perspectives... and wanted to create some good discussion.

We agreed to conduct two collaborative inquiry processes, one for teachers and one for administrators, to begin sharing perspectives on this complex topic. Collaborative inquiry is an innovative approach to action research that enables participants to address questions and challenges that matter to them most¹...

In this case, both teachers and administrators were united in their goal of increasing student achievement. However, different, and sometimes strong, perspectives emerged both within and between these two groups. Despite their shared value of teamwork and belief that their successful collaboration was key to increasing student achievement, they struggled to reconcile differences. As is common in many systems, power dynamics inhibited dialogue, and many participants did not feel comfortable exploring or challenging assumptions held by others.

It became clear to me that these participants would benefit from a deeper understanding of collaboration and the expanded vocabulary that conflict resolution training provides. I therefore integrated a half-day session on conflict resolution into the program design....

The training helped the participants deepen their level of dialogue by shifting their focus from positions to underlying needs... They ... expressed commitment to fully engage with one another moving forward and not be conflict avoidant, as they had in the past....The short module whet participants' appetite for additional learning, a healthy outcome, particularly for a school.

¹ Why Collaborative Inquiry? “Collaborative inquiry holds potential for deep and significant change in education. Bringing educators together in inquiry sustains attention to goals over time, fosters teachers’ learning and practice development, and results in gains for students.” – Canadian Education Association, 2014

https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/CBS_CollaborativeInquiry.pdf

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THE PARDES RODEF SHALOM SCHOOL PROGRAM is a joint venture of the Pardes Center for Jewish Educators and the Pardes Center for Judaism and Conflict. www.pardes.org.il/prss.

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