

COLLABORATE



PHOTO: MEG VALKENBURG

What does Collaborate to Educate Mean?

By Meg Valkenburg

Collaborative learning is a high-impact teaching and learning method that builds upon each learner's strengths and areas of improvement. Collaborative tasks, such as assignments and projects, foster the ability to work and solve problems in tandem with other people as well as reinforce one's own knowledge and learning. In the classroom, collaborative learning looks like group work, study groups, team-based assignments, presentations, writing, and research. Collaboration is one of the 4 C's of 21st Century Learning Skills. The other three are critical thinking, creativity, and communication. Mentoring, guiding, and developing a student's curiosity and innovation epitomizes the collaborative classroom. This newsletter provides information to educators on the benefits of utilizing collaboration to create an engaged(ing) classroom.

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To establish a collaborative and student-centered environment, the educator must be mindful of the impacts on the dynamics of the classroom. We influence our students the most.

Educational leaders say:

Intrapersonal development through collaboration heightens learners' ability to form meaningful collaborative intertwined relationships. Through a well-developed supportive learning environment, students develop a better identity and self-efficacy. Finally, students can manage technology appropriately (CAS, 2006)

Collaboration builds a supportive community for learners to take ownership of their shared learning experience (Highley, 2018).

Collaboration creates community-building activities which offer safe and supportive space to lessen anxiety, build confidence and increase productivity (Rieser & Dempsey, 2018).

Collaborate/Educate will help teach you how to incorporate collaboration and other cutting-edge tools to engage students in the learning process. Join us on the journey!



PHOTO: MEG VALKENBURG



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LEGO® Serious Play® Method

by Meg Valkenburg

The LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® method (LSP) is an amazing collaborative and innovative teaching method developed by the LEGO company over twenty years ago. While the LEGO company has no affiliation now, after releasing the method into the creative commons domain, they still supply the LSP bricks. However, LEGO does recommend folks become trained in the method (Rasmussen, 2017).

LSP engages a group of individuals in a complex way of reimagining, communicating/listening, and problem-solving through the guidance of a trained facilitator. Like other teaching methods, it was developed using components from business, psychology, organizational development, and education (Rasmussen, 2017).

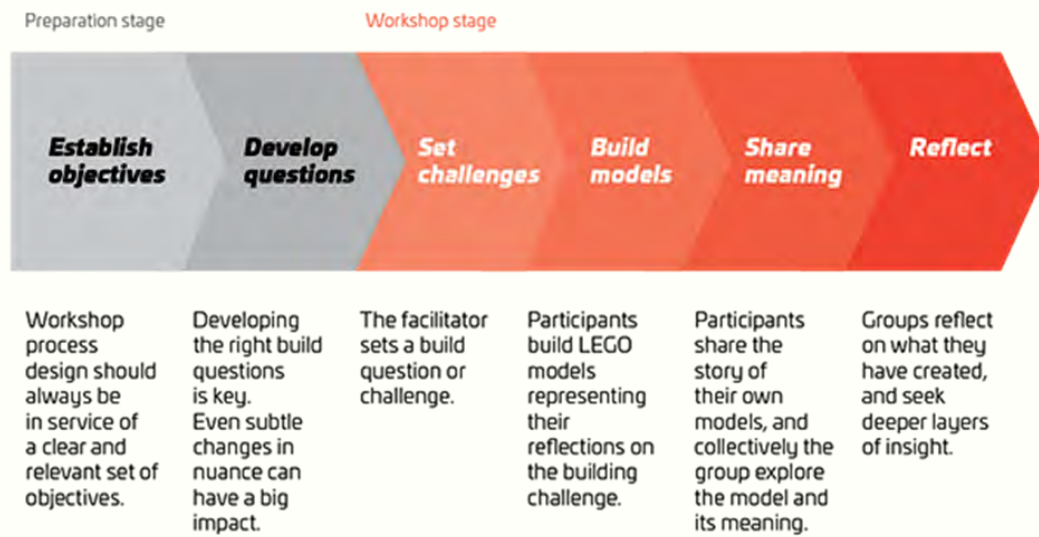
LSP is a method that encourages participants to "listen with their eyes" and "trust their hands" (Blair, 2020). It focuses on auditory and kinesthetic, participatory, and collaborative learning.

The Technique is based on the premise that:

- Leaders (in business or teachers in education) don't have all the answers
- Success depends on hearing every voice in the room (LSP breaks down barriers)
- People DO want to participate and own what they contribute (people want credit for their contributions to the whole)
- For many reasons teams are dysfunctional and leave untapped potential behind
- A best practice is to be agile and innovative when working in a complex ever-changing environment and diverse world.

The 6 stages of the workshop flow are below. The reason the workshops MUST be facilitated by a well-trained facilitator is for the reasons listed above. Without an unbiased facilitator, an egalitarian and innovative environment is not possible.

In the Next issue, we will go more in-depth with incorporating LSP into a course.



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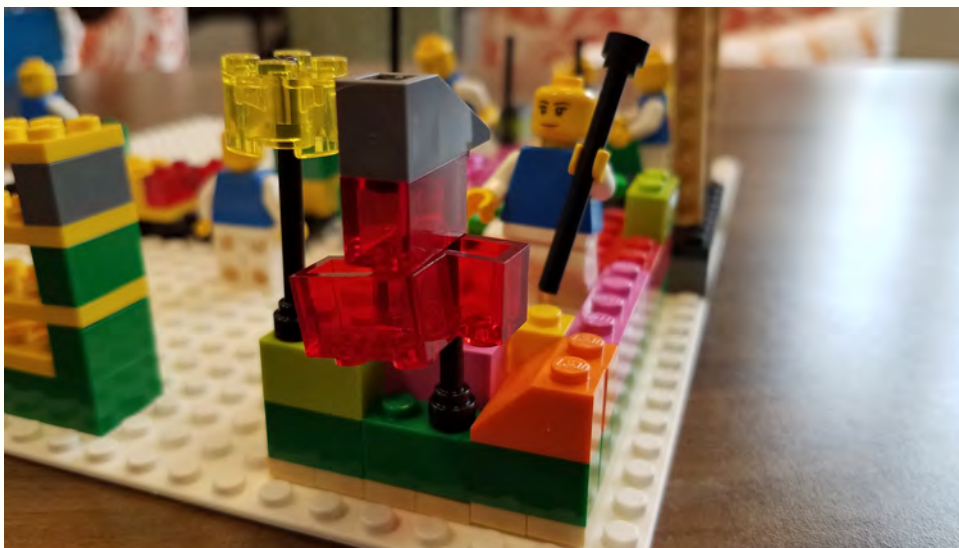


PHOTO: MEG VALKENBURG

Learning Literacy With LEGOs

by *Monica Morrison*

"Children learn as they play. More importantly, in play, children learn how to learn" O. Fred Donaldson. Learning through play is not specific to children, adults learn through play too! Literacy is an incredibly important skill for success as it is often a crucial requirement for fulfilling occupation roles like being a student, employee, employer, or simply engaging in leisurely activities. According to the United States Literacy Project on 2019, "1 in 4 children in America grow up without learning how to read." Additionally, as much as 45 million Americans are functionally illiterate. Illiteracy rates are staggering and therefore a major issue that demands attention from educators. One promising solution to learning literacy is through the use of a little imagination, hands-on play, and LEGOs. Building words out of LEGOs or magnets inspires creativity, develops fine motor and process skills, and encourages storytelling. LEGO word building teaches children how to critically think while designing letters and sounding out consonant-vowel blends by encouraging them to look at each of the different sized blocks and think about how each different sized lego block could be used to make the shape of a letter. Storytelling with LEGOs builds and characters enables exploration, promotes praxis and motor planning, and encourages self-directed choices which are skills are necessary for learning and social participation.

PHOTO: MONICA MORRISON

Reading Buddies

Each week, I take college students over to local elementary schools to tutor literacy for youth in the after-school S.H.I.N.E (Schools in Homes and Education) Program. In keeping up with the collaborative learning concepts, I wrote LEGO literacy into my tutoring plans. For the past few weeks, my tutors have brought their LEGO kits and have created literacy games with their students. We first tried out our LEGO Letters game with our second graders as seen in the picture to the right. Our second graders were given a secret letter and were told to build that letter on their LEGO base plate. When students finished building their secret assigned letter, they had to reveal their letter design to their peers and as a group, they had to collaborate to unscramble the letters they had each designed to ultimately come up with the spelling word. Students were thoroughly engaged and attentive while building their letter, trying to decide which blocks would make the best design, and eagerly worked together to solve the mystery word.

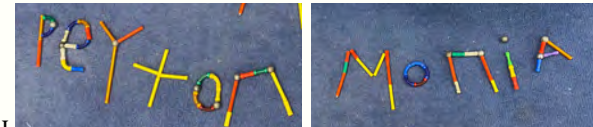


PHOTO: MARLON PITTS
(SHINE COORDINATOR)



MEG'S MESSAGE

WHAT YOU SEEK IS SEEKING YOU- RUMI

I believe that our intentions in the world are what we bring to ourselves. For a very long time, I have been interested in experiential learning having been the civic and community engagement professional at Wilkes University. But something was always missing until I began my EdD. I found a group of educators who embraced building up

the whole person. To do that we have to put a lot of love, joy, and fun into the equation. It wasn't enough to just have experiential learning opportunities to help students, it had to be joyful and fun. Students needed to feel the passion I had for what I was doing and the regard I had for them. All these years later I've embraced the Ludic teacher in me. What I was searching for had found me.



Meg Valkenburg is a SAM (Student Affairs Mom of 4) working in higher education for 20 years. She has a Master's degree in counseling. She is pursuing an MBA and EdD from Wilkes University. Before becoming the Civic Engagement Professional at Wilkes University she was an AmeriCorps*VISTA with Pennsylvania Campus Compact. She recently brought the Bonner Scholars program to Wilkes after a lot of hard work and collaboration. Lastly, she is a LEGO Serious Play-certified facilitator!



Monica Morrison is the AmeriCorps VISTA at Wilkes University. Her project as VISTA is to increase youth literacy by creating mentoring relationships between college students and youth in the Wilkes Barre Area School District. She builds capacity by recruiting college students as tutors to help children improve literacy skills, develop friendships, and promote self-efficacy through tutoring and mindfulness activities. She is a former graduate of Wilkes University and is currently pursuing a master's degree in occupational therapy at Misericordia University. She also plans to obtain her 200 hour yoga teacher training in the nearby future!



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Keywords: LEGO, The LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY®Method, Literacy Kinesthetic Learning, Problem Solving, Transcultural, Facilitation, Imagination, Radical, Experiential Learning, Collaboration, Communication, Teamwork, Metaphor.