
Introduction

Thousands of our nation's students are failing or dropping out of school every year. For a host of reasons, school is not working for them. What if, instead of such devastating outcomes, we heard students telling their parents and friends about how much they love school and their teachers? Imagine, if at the end of the school year, students were heard telling their friends what Nika told his:

You are going to want to take American History from Mrs. Baker. She is awesome. I thought I was going to flunk out of her class back in the fall. I was getting failing grades on most of my tests and papers. She really criticized everything I did. But something changed mid-year when we were studying westward expansion. Mrs. Baker started treating me differently. She was much more patient with me and talked to me more about my interests, family background, and experiences. It was like she wanted to get to know me as a person. She even talked to the class about how the White man treated Native Americans during this time in history. No other teacher ever took time to talk about my own people this way. She even invited my dad in to share what he had learned from my great grandfather. I really felt like I belonged in that class. I think she really cared about me and wanted me to be successful. And I was. I passed the class with a really good grade. I can't wait to take history again.

We attribute Nika's success in American History to Sue Baker's year-long participation with her colleagues in the Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning (CASL). During that time, Sue was challenged to examine her beliefs about Nika, his Native American heritage, her own white middle-class upbringing and values, and her practice. She shared this reflection during the end-of-year celebration:

I chose to study Nika because he represented other students in my class who struggled to organize their thinking in writing. I also wanted to learn ways to be more responsive to my Native American students. Over the many years I have been in this school, I never have felt totally successful in establishing relationships with the Native American students in my classroom. They always seemed to be a bit standoffish with me, and I wondered why. I am glad I chose this focus, because mid-year I had a major breakthrough that changed not only how I thought about my Native American students, but my students of color in general, and how I teach history.

My success was a shining example of how helpful my participation in my CASL study group was for me. Not only did Nika's writing and his interactions with me greatly improve, so too did those of most of my other students. Only a few still struggle, and that has raised additional questions, which I hope to address in my inquiry next year.

We believe scenarios like the one with Nika and Sue are possible when teachers engage in facilitated and structured collaborative inquiry that not only enriches their existing professional knowledge base but also heightens their awareness of how their beliefs and values about their students drive their practice. Such transformative learning supports teachers in their persistent pursuit of responsive learning approaches that support each and every student's success in reaching standards of excellence.

What kind of professional learning experience resulted in such transformative learning for the teacher? This book will help you understand how you and your colleagues can implement the Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning in your school and district.

THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF CASL

The Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning (referred to by teachers as "castle") is a professional learning design in which teacher groups analyze student work samples and assessments to learn how to effectively support students' learning of complex academic standards. Teachers' engagement in the process is driven by their relentless pursuit to discover and apply responsive approaches for learning so that each and every student reaches standards of excellence. This inquiry extends over a period of months "because deep learning rarely results from a single experience, and teachers need time to conduct longitudinal studies in which they test and reconstruct their current theories of what works" (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Through collaborative inquiry, teachers move away from using uniform “best practices” toward tailoring culturally and linguistically responsive approaches that meet the needs of each and every student.

Teacher self-awareness is an important part of developing culturally responsive approaches and positive attitudes about teaching and learning. Through the structured and facilitated CASL processes, teachers examine their beliefs and practices about teaching and learning. During the study group sessions, teachers actively move beyond “polite” conversations of simply sharing practices toward more in-depth conversations, known as dialogue, about students whom teachers feel challenged to reach and teach (Little, Gearhart, Curry, & Kafka, 1999).

In the process, assumptions that may be limiting teachers’ capacity to give full attention to the needs of each of their students are revealed. Potential solutions are identified, tested, analyzed, and refined through a systematic inquiry process. Consequently, CASL allows teachers to find equitable ways for all students in the present and future to reach standards of excellence.

THE BENEFITS OF CASL

Several research studies (see Chapter 1) support CASL’s positive influence on students’ learning of complex curriculum standards. To promote this growth, CASL teachers enhance their professional knowledge of content, curriculum alignment, student development and learning, responsive instruction, assessment design and interpretation, and contextual factors. CASL teachers also demonstrate confidence in their ability to promote student learning and the commitment to do so. Finally, teachers demonstrate cultural competence, collaborative inquiry skills, and the ability to self-assess their professional learning needs. Schools and districts benefit from curriculum alignment within and across grade levels and institutional norms of collaboration and inquiry are established.

WHY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CASL IS SO TIMELY

Why did we write this book? What makes this book so important right now? CASL is the result of over two decades of our efforts to help teachers become more reflective about their practice and, therefore, more intentional and effective in promoting student learning. Early on, we noticed that many professional learning designs taught strategies but did not promote the analytical decision-making required to figure out what strategy to use with which student under what conditions. At the same time, the

student demographics in our nation's schools were becoming more and more diverse. Teachers were, and still are, faced with the challenge of meeting the learning needs of students whose race, socioeconomic status, and cultural background are very different than the teacher's own. Furthermore, few professional learning designs have helped teachers inquire into or understand how students from diverse backgrounds learn—a key piece in becoming a more effective and responsible teacher.

Since we wrote the 2003 ASCD bestseller, *The Collaborative Analysis of Student Work: Improving Teaching and Learning*, we have used and refined CASL with several hundred teachers in scores of schools and districts. As we have conducted research and reflected upon our experiences, we have made an exciting discovery: *Facilitated structured collaborative inquiry into how students learn complex academic standards helps teachers relentlessly and effectively pursue, discover, and apply responsive approaches for learning so that each and every student, regardless of students' backgrounds or interests, reaches standards of excellence.*

This new book differs from the previous one in two significant ways. First, we focus the CASL inquiry more specifically on those very students for whom equity is often not in place. We explain how CASL is structured to help study group members develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to provide every student access to a rigorous curriculum, high content standards, quality instruction, and appropriate assessments. Second, we provide many more tools and directions for how to facilitate CASL's collaborative skills and inquiry processes.

Six primary developments have prompted our decision to substantively rewrite our 2003 book:

1. The *cultural and linguistic diversity* of students is growing at an unprecedented rate, which compounds the challenges of successfully preparing all students to be college- and career-ready, and responsible and active citizens. CASL study groups develop the knowledge, skills, and moral purposes that are required to provide every student equal access to a rigorous curriculum, including high content standards and quality instruction.
2. The *Common Core State Standards* have introduced a new level of rigor and specificity into teachers' daily work. The standards focus on students' application of knowledge in authentic situations and on the construction of new knowledge. To be successful, teachers will need to use and be supported to understand and employ instructional strategies that facilitate critical and creative thinking, collaboration, problem solving, research and inquiry skills, and presentation or demonstration skills. The CASL inquiry process supports accomplishment of both goals.

3. *Research studies* suggest that higher levels of student achievement are more likely to be exhibited in schools where the professional learning is “primarily school or classroom based and is integrated into the workday, consisting of teachers assessing and finding solutions for authentic and immediate problems of practice as a part of a cycle of continuous improvement” (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010, p. 2). Such job-embedded professional learning moves teachers away from isolation and toward sustained collaborative study teams (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Adree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). The CASL design is one type of job-embedded professional learning that aligns closely with the qualities of professional learning supported by the research.
4. *Transformative teacher learning* raises teachers’ awareness of the influence that their beliefs and assumptions have on how they interact with their students. When teachers assume that their own values are the norm, they may unconsciously be privileging students from the teachers’ same cultural background and disadvantaging those different than them. “Research reveals that for lasting changes in behavior to occur, beliefs and assumptions must be brought to consciousness and the deep structures supporting behaviors must be addressed (Yero, 2002; Bocchino, 1993)” (Guerra & Nelson, 2009, p. 354). Through CASL, teachers not only add skills to their existing repertoire (additive professional learning); they also engage in *transformative learning*, defined as the “process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 7–8). Transformative learning is particularly critical in contexts in which teachers’ cultural values and beliefs are different from those of their students.
5. Collaborative inquiry groups, while promising for professional learning, have often faltered due to inadequate *facilitation and leadership support*. Facilitated collaborative inquiry moves teachers toward more in-depth conversations about how they can facilitate the learning of students whom they feel challenged to reach and teach. Where rich dialogue is facilitated, we have found teachers come to believe—through concrete evidence of success—that they can have a significant impact on all of their students’ learning (Loyd, 2006). After 15 years of experience, we offer several tools to maximize the effectiveness of CASL groups.

6. State and district leaders across the country are working diligently to implement more effective *teacher-evaluation systems*. These systems describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that teachers are expected to exhibit in their classrooms. The Framework: Teacher as Collaborative Inquirer provides both the theoretical underpinnings of the CASL professional learning design and the teacher learning outcomes for CASL. These outcomes are highly aligned with many of the teaching standards and frameworks used to measure teachers' effectiveness (e.g., Danielson, 2011; Marzano, 2011; National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1987). Teachers engaged in CASL are continuously asked to reflect on their own professional growth in terms of the outcomes in the framework.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

We recommend that you read the chapters in the order in which they are presented. In this way, you will have a clear understanding and appreciation for what CASL is intended to accomplish and how the essential features of this professional learning design are organized and implemented to lead to such outcomes.

Although we present CASL's design in a particular order, we also provide suggestions for when and how you might take a different approach based on your own context.

The book is divided into three sections which proceed from background about CASL and its outcomes, to ways to create a culture for collaborative inquiry, to specific guidelines for engaging teachers in each phase of the CASL design.

Section A. CASL Overview and Background

This first section provides an overview and background of the essential features, benefits, and outcomes of CASL.

- Chapter 1, "The Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning: Essential Features and Benefits," presents the key features of the CASL design and research on its benefits.
- Chapter 2, "Why CASL Works. The Framework: Teacher as Collaborative Inquirer," explains the conceptual underpinnings of the CASL design. This understanding is crucial for maintaining the vision of the kind of teacher CASL is intended to develop and for adapting the design to fit your needs and any challenges that may arise.

Section B. Building a Culture for Collaborative Inquiry

This section details the structures, supports, and resources necessary for creating the organizational culture that will support the effective implementation of CASL.

- Chapter 3, “Working Agreements and Communication Skills for Collaborative Inquiry,” describes the kinds of positive and productive interactions that are essential in developing trust and successful inquiry among the teachers as they engage in the CASL processes.
- Chapter 4, “Leadership and Support,” provides an account of the kind of support that school administrators need to provide in order to establish and maintain a school culture for collaborative inquiry.
- Chapter 5, “Facilitation of Collaborative Inquiry,” details the role of the CASL facilitator in teaching, modeling, and coaching teachers as they relentlessly pursue, discover, and apply responsive approaches for learning so that each and every student reaches standards of excellence.

Section C. The Five CASL Phases

The beginning of this third section includes guidelines for conducting a workshop to introduce CASL to teachers and to begin developing the necessary skills for collaboration. Chapters 6–9 present each of the five CASL phases as follows:

- Chapter 6, “Phase I: Establishing a Focus for CASL Inquiry”
- Chapter 7, “Phase II: Defining Teachers’ Professional Inquiry Goals
- Chapter 8, “Phase III: Inquiring Into Teaching for Learning
- Chapter 9, “Phase IV: Assessing Learning Progress” and “Phase V: Integrating Learning Into Teachers’ Professional Practice”

CONCLUSION

Supporting Materials

- The online resources contain (a) optional activities for further professional learning, for example gaining consistency in assessment scoring, and (b) responses to the communication skills exercises presented in Section C.

AUTHORS' NOTE

The examples in this book are adaptations and composites of real situations, schools, teachers, and students. In most cases the individuals' names and identities have been altered. We are grateful to all the teachers and administrators for letting us be participant observers as they implemented and engaged in CASL.



Visit the companion website at
<http://resources.corwin.com/Collaborativeanalysis>
for additional resources.