

Conversations Creating Communities

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**HOSPITALITY IS THE WELCOMING OF
STRANGERS,**

AND

**GENEROSITY IS AN OFFER WITH NO
EXPECTATION OF RETURN**

NOVEMBER 12, 2010

Our Learning Outcomes

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- Understand the importance of community building and how leaders may design structures for invitational dialogues that build community.
- Develop deeper understanding of common and unique perspectives of others in our learning community.
- Experience an Ownership Conversation and consider its possible applications.



Our Purpose: To Provide Instructional Leadership And Support For Teachers In Improving Educational Outcomes In Facility Schools

- This group has always cared about the quality of the education that students in facilities receive.
- You helped get legislation passed.
- Many of you have been working tirelessly and for a long time.
- We've had task forces and planning sessions and meetings galore.

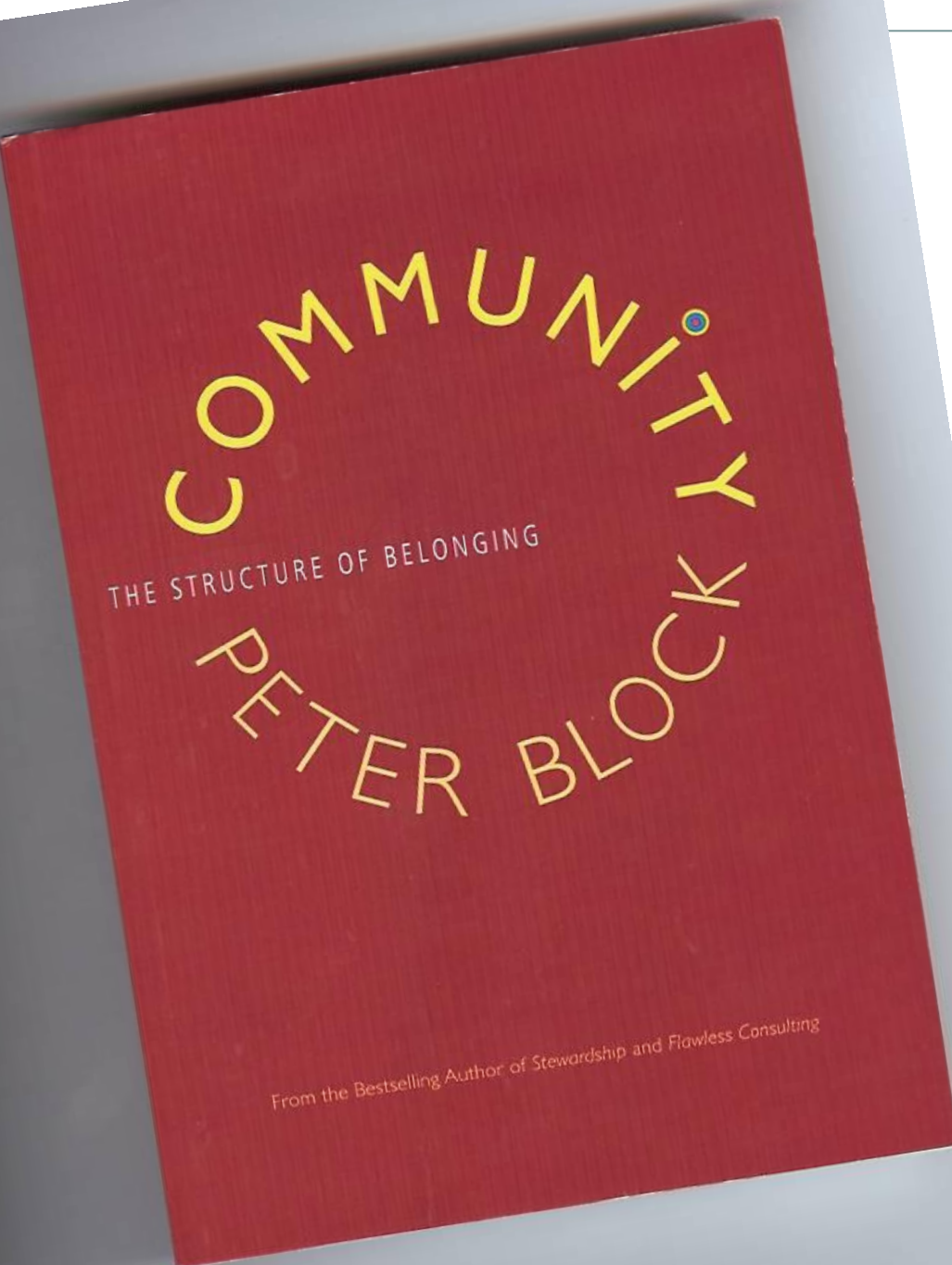
And We're Still Not Where We Want To Be!

Community

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by Peter Block

**“ENTER ALL THOSE WHO
ARE SEEKING A FUTURE
DISTINCT FROM THE PAST”**



Block, P. (2009). *Community: The structure of belonging*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

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Gifts

- Experience
- Willingness to
- Acceptance

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The Transforming Community

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“...problem solving can make things better but cannot change the nature of things.

...Community transformation shifts the context from a place of fear and fault, law and oversight, corporation and “systems” to ***gifts, generosity, and abundance; social fabric and chosen accountability; and associational life and engagement with one another.***

...Choosing Possibility over Problem Solving.” (or *“in addition to...!”*)

Belonging

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- Three meanings:
 - “to be related to and a part of something....To belong is to know, even in the middle of the night, that I am among friends.”
 - “being an owner:....To belong to a community is to act as a creator and co-owner of that community. What I consider mine I will build and nurture.”
 - “a longing to be. Being is our capacity to be present, and to discover our authenticity and whole selves.

Community: Key Ideas

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- The social fabric of community is formed from an expanding **shared sense of belonging**.
- Transform the isolation and self-interest within our community into **connectedness and caring for the whole**.
- **Move from problems to possibilities.**
- The cost of our detachment and disconnection is not only our isolation, our loneliness, but also the fact that **there are too many people in our communities whose gifts remain on the margin**.

Fostering Community

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- The small group is the unit of transformation
- Leadership is convening
- Questions are more transforming than answers
- Six conversations materialize belonging
- Hospitality, the welcoming of strangers, is central
- Physical and social space support belonging

- What we normally call problems (low performance, high costs, poor morale, unsafe streets, poor healthcare) are really symptoms of the breakdown of community.
- Creating community requires the courage to acknowledge that we need each other. It is also a choice for restoration over retribution, connectedness over fear, local knowledge over expertise.

Organizing for Dialogue

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- 1) Find 2 other people you know the least.
- 2) Sit in a circle with your knees 9 inches apart.
- 3) Individually reflect on the questions.
- 4) Talk in trios.

Ownership Conversation (15 minutes)

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- What is the story about educational programs in facilities and their quality that you hear yourself most often telling?
- What is the story about the quality of educational programs in facilities that you are wedded to and maybe even take your identity from?
- What are the payoffs you receive from holding on to this story?
- What is your attachment to this story costing you?

Join another trio (6 minutes)

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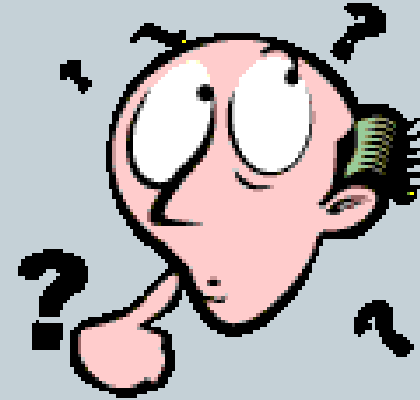
- What common themes exist for your group?
- What did you notice as people shared in the trio?



Group Debrief

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- What did you notice?
- What are you wondering?
- Why would a conversation on ownership be important or supportive for your teachers?



“Being an owner:....To belong to a community is to act as a creator and co-owner of that community. What I consider mine I will build and nurture.”

Gifts (6 minutes)

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Go back and complete your small group (trio) with the exchange of gifts:

- 1) Tell each person in your group, what gift you received from him/her.
- 2) Respond with “Thank you, I like hearing that.” and “Tell me more”

Too long in a small group gets tribal, people don't want to go back to the large group.

Basic Principles for Conversation

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- Give them a question that drives you crazy
- Give them too little time
- Find 2 other people
- Sit with knees 9 inches apart
- Don't wait to be chosen
- Choose someone you know the least

Guidelines for Conversation Groups

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- Create circles of three to six – ask them to sit with people they know the least. This maximum mix is good for opening questions and raising doubts.
- One structural sequence for creating community is to start with the individuals reflecting on the question, and then have them talk in trios, next in groups of six, and then to the whole community. 1-3-6-all

Attending to Departures

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During:

- 1) Have three people from the group say “Here’s what you’ve given us...”
- 2) Ask the departing person, “what are you taking with you? What shifted for you, became clearer? What value have you received as a result of being here? Is there anything else you’d like to say to the community?”
- 3) Thank them for coming.

Attending to Departures

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After:

Remove their chairs – if the chairs remain empty, it only reminds us of our loss.

All of this takes time, but we are choosing depth over speed.

Plus, how we treat that person today is how we will be treated tomorrow.

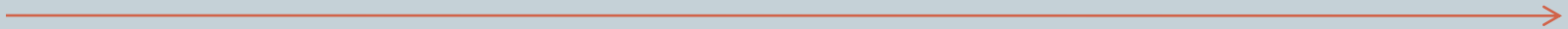
Leadership

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- The core task of leadership is to build community. Our traditional strategies for dealing with problems of performance, quality, cost, employee satisfaction, health, safety are strong on individualism and weak on community.

Individualism

Community



Applying to your work...

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- Consider ways in which the students and staff at your facility might benefit from conversations.
- Can you imagine a conversation about ownership of the educational program in your facility being helpful?
- What ideas are you taking with you for auto-ponder?
- Share with your table and be prepared to share with the large group.

We've Had The Invitational and Ownership Conversations

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Coming Soon....

- The Possibility Conversation
 - The Dissent Conversation
 - The Commitment Conversation
 - The Gifts Conversation
- and
- Leadership Tips and Strategies for Structuring Transformative Conversations

Sharing

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- Stand
- Say your name
- What struck you?

Once you trust the people, you trust the content. Trust comes through vulnerability.

Learning needs the expression of doubt, naming it loses its power over you.

Thank you for.....

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- The gifts you provide for those in your facility.
- The gifts you bring to this learning community.
- The gifts you have brought to your facilitators.

Thank You!