



THE COLLABORATORY PROJECT is a Northwestern University initiative funded by federal, state and foundation grants. The Project is an outreach initiative of the University's Information Technology organization and draws on the experience and technical expertise of the entire organization to support its mission. The Collaboratory Project provides consulting, training, technical support, and information services to educators interested in using the Collaboratory to improve student learning and achievement.

THE COLLABORATORY is an easy-to-use, Web-based collaborative learning environment. Teachers use Collaboratory resources and services to develop innovative project-based activities in a framework for engaged learning that are aligned to learning standards and provide for assessment. It is a supportive and secure environment that teachers use to meet their specific curricular needs.

COLLABORATORY COMMUNICATION SERVICES include messaging, conferencing, discussion forums, invitations, announcements, and calendars to support collaboration among teachers and students. Automatic alerts and notifications keep participants up-to-date about activities, new projects, and events. Search capabilities enable participants to easily find other people and projects.

COLLABORATORY RESOURCES provide the scaffolding to develop innovative project-based curricular activities. These resources include:

- THE CYBRARY: customized, curriculum-specific virtual libraries of Internet resources;
- MEDIASPACE: "electronic multimedia postcards" containing text, graphics, sound, and/or video are used to share projects and information;
- THE INTERNET BOOK CLUB: students share book reviews, compositions and poetry;
- THE SURVEY STUDIO: on-line surveys, questionnaires and data collection forms.
- ePORTFOLIOS: students create and share work organize in binders and folders created by their teachers; and,
- THE NEXUS: people with common interests come together to create interactive on-line communities.

An EVALUATION STUDY in June, 2005 reported that teachers feel the Collaboratory has a positive impact on student motivation and engagement and on the integration of technology into the curriculum. Compared with traditional classroom settings, teachers reported that completing class work via the Collaboratory fosters greater personal responsibility for student learning and promotes greater student interaction. Equally important, teachers see significant benefits for students using the Collaboratory in areas that cut across the curriculum, including working in teams, problem solving, communicating and making connections.

Today, OVER 6,700 ILLINOIS TEACHERS and more than 650 technology coordinators and media specialists, representing over 1,780 Illinois schools have accounts in the Collaboratory.

The Collaboratory is available through a standard Web browser from servers at Northwestern 7 days/week, 24 hours/day. Students can participate with anything from a single computer and a modem to a fully networked classroom. Students submit text, graphics, sound and video files from a standard Web browser. Teachers manage their projects and approve student submissions through password-protected Web pages. The Collaboratory creates Web pages dynamically using the materials submitted by students and approved by their teacher.

Because the Collaboratory is participant-driven and closely tied to the curriculum, it provides a fertile environment for developing innovative collaborative projects that participating teachers can review, share, and learn from. By removing technical barriers to accomplishing objectives and delivering services, the Collaboratory is attracting a large and diverse community of participants. It is making it possible for educators to successfully carry out significant and meaningful educational activities that would otherwise be technically impossible or prohibitively expensive.

COLLABORATORY eCOURSES and documentation are available on-line for teachers who want to learn how to use the Collaboratory to develop technology-enriched, project-based learning activities for their students. On-line eCourses can be taken at any time or as part of a coordinated school or district initiative.

COLLABORATORY SPONSORED PROJECTS provide opportunities for teachers and students with little or no experience to work in the Collaboratory with more experienced participants on short, engaging collaborative projects. Sponsored Projects typically use a Cybrary to share and collect information, a Survey to share ideas and information collected by participants, and a Nexus Community where participants create, share and discuss documents that may contain text, pictures, sound and/or video with other participants.

The COLLABORATORY PROJECT SYMPOSIUM is held each spring at Northwestern University. The Symposium provides a forum where educators working with the Collaboratory Project can meet to share projects, learn from each other's experience, and find partners for activities. Videos of Symposium presentations are available on the Collaboratory Web site.

Teachers, school project teams, multi-school collaborations, and school districts interested in learning more about the Collaboratory Project and how to participate in the Collaboratory should contact the Collaboratory Project at [collaboratory@northwestern.edu](mailto:collaboratory@northwestern.edu).

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