Creating Community in the Classroom

Monday, November 2, noon
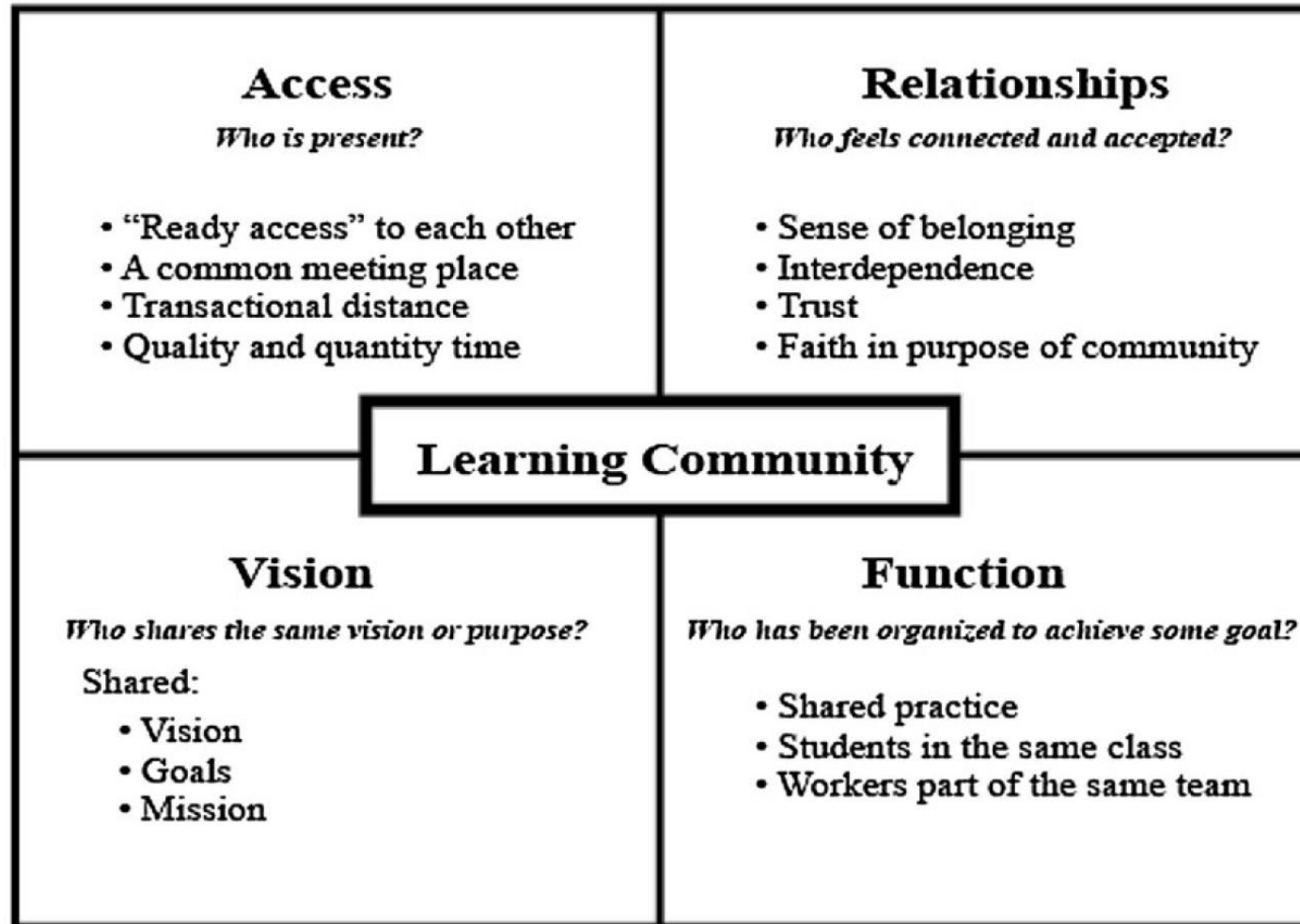
Facilitated by Tim Arner & Joyce Stern

Agenda

- Brief framing presentation on Classroom Community

- Some student feedback

- Breakout discussions with faculty, staff, and students
  - Reflect on lessons learned from Fall term 1
  - Discuss strategies for developing community in Fall term 2

Why classroom community

- Challenges of forming, maintaining community during remote learning

- Social and intellectual activities need to be intentional in a virtual classroom

- First- and second-year students are less likely to have established relationships and shared experiences with other students in a course

- Research has identified that learning communities have many positive effects for students
  - Higher student engagement, development of cognitive skills, greater respect for diversity, increased motivation, greater satisfaction with learning experience (West and Williams, "…a proposed framework for defining learning communities," pp.1569-70)

Defining Learning Communities

Access
Who is present?

- "Ready access" to each other
- A common meeting place
- Transactional distance
- Quality and quantity time

Relationships
Who feels connected and accepted?

- Sense of belonging
- Interdependence
- Trust
- Faith in purpose of community

Learning Community

Vision
Who shares the same vision or purpose?

Shared:
- Vision
- Goals
- Mission

Function
Who has been organized to achieve some goal?

- Shared practice
- Students in the same class
- Workers part of the same team

(West and Williams, p.1571)

Building trust

- Different instincts at work in a virtual classroom

- How does trust develop between instructors and students?

- How do students better trust each other?

- Relationship between social environment and intellectual work
  - Need to feel respected and safe
  - Willingness to take risks, ask questions

- Importance of rules and norms (Major, *Teaching Online,* p.248)

Student feedback on particularly valuable practices

- Incorporate social (less formal) time
- Group work
- One-on-one time with the instructor
- Focus on quality rather than quantity of interactions

Resources and Works Cited

"7 Activities to Build Community and Positive Classroom Culture During Online Learning," *New York Times*, Aug. 2020

Bordreau, Emily. "A Place of (Remote) Belonging: How educators can create a welcoming classroom community during distance learning," *Usable Knowledge*, Harvard Graduate School of Education, April 2020

"Build Community in Your Online Course," Harvard University

Krause, Caitlin. "How to Forge a Strong Community in an Online Classroom," *Edutopia* April 2020

Major, Claire Howell. *Teaching online: A guide to theory, research, and practice*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015. Full text available on Project Muse.

O'Malley, Sharon. "Professors Share Ideas for Building Community in Online Courses," *Inside Higher Ed*, July 2017

Toor, Rachel. "How to Build Community in a Zoom Class with Personal Essays." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Oct. 2020

Toor, Rachel. "Turns Out You Can Build Community in a Zoom Classroom," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 2020

West, Richard E., and Gregory S. Williams. "'I don't think that word means what you think it means': A proposed framework for defining learning communities." *Educational Technology Research and Development* 65, no. 6 (2017): 1569-1582.

Questions for discussion

What were positive classroom experiences and interactions from Fall term 1?

How can instructors help build a sense of classroom community?

What role do students play in creating classroom community?