


## BRIEFLY NOTED


 William Whipple, writing in the *Washington Center News* (Winter, 1989), describes the conclusions of the steering committee of the American Association for Higher Education's Action Community on Collaborative Learning. While experiencing quite a bit of difficulty in defining exactly what collaborative learning is, the committee still was able to distill several important characteristics. In an educational setting: 1) Collaboration involves both teachers and learners as active participants in a synergistic learning process; 2) Collaboration bridges the gap between teachers and students and lessens

the distinction between the giver and receiver of knowledge; 3) Collaboration develops a sense of community and encourages the skill of cooperation rather than competition; 4) Collaboration stresses the creation rather than simply the transference of knowledge; 5) Collaboration helps to merge teaching and research; and 6) Collaboration stresses collective knowledge rather than knowledge which exists in the mind of an individual.

One statement by Whipple sums up the philosophy underlying collaborative learning, and explains his committee's reasons for existence: "Rooted in

the belief that learning is inherently social in nature, collaborative learning stresses common inquiry as the basic learning process."



 *The Teaching Professor* (April 1989) gives four basic techniques instructors can use to motivate students to read outside assignments.

1. *Give them reasons to read.* Resist answering questions in class, when those answers were provided in the reading assignment. Let them know that some topics for which they will be responsible will not be covered in class. Give them guidance as to what to look for in their reading, how to underline, take notes etc.

2. *Use book material in class.* Cite the author's statement on page 20. Show them that you have underlined that passage. Inquire if they've done the same. Read particularly useful passages aloud.

3. *Assume they have done the reading.* Don't ask how many read the assignment. This implies that some haven't. If a show of hands reveals that only half the class did the reading, those who did not are comforted by the fact that they have lots of company. Arrange the discussion and questioning processes to create discomfort for the unprepared.

4. *Show that you value reading.* Con-  
trive ways to indicate that you read the same assignment they did, and that you enjoyed it. Discuss the ways in which your thoughts were stimulated by particular passages. Relate the reading to previous lessons or life experiences.



# REACHING THROUGH TEACHING

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