

What does it mean to be part of a learning community in *these times*?

Your name	Your thoughts
Shelly	Being part of a learning community at this time means that I can hear the voices of others who may not have a platform to write or speak.
Miriam	To be a part of a community of who will share various views on learning, literacy, social justice...for the purpose of understanding, making sense of the issue and begin to think of our place in sharing with our children (the next generation) and how to advocate what is right.
Adina	To me, being a part of a learning community in these times means having a community of people to learn with, collaborate with, and to keep me grounded in the reasons I am a teacher. It can be hard to remember anything other than the annoyances of Google Meet, it can be easy to let the injustices we're seeing throughout the country cause activist paralysis, but I hope this community will always be a place for me to be reminded that at my core, I am a teacher and I want to grow as a teacher for my students, even if I haven't physically seen them in many months. Particularly given the instability and inconsistency we are facing currently, no one has all the answers and hopefully together we can hold each other accountable to doing hard work for our students, and help each other through an unprecedented time as we all learn more about how our identities as teachers are changing.
Eli	It means to be resilient when problems arise with technology. Being present with your mind and actively listening despite whatever is happening around you. It also means that we need to remember everyone in the community is coming from a different space mentally, physically, and emotionally each day. While this is always true, we are not able to escape into a classroom. Many people are sitting in the places that are draining them. This presents a unique challenge for all of those involved in the learning community.
Noelle	Being a part of a learning community during this time of civil unrest has instilled within me an overwhelming desire to lead. Those within communities focused on teaching and educating are important sources of knowledge and information. I feel proud to be in a position to share knowledge with my peers, family, friends, and students. We are needed now more than ever!
Barrett	It wasn't until later in my teaching practice did I think intentionally about what it meant to have a community, let alone a "learning community" of sorts. I spent a lot of time, too much time, alone. As I grew in the field, I saw, especially as a literature teacher, just how important it was to have great 'thought-partners' to create the best exemplar lesson plans or support for students. It's only been probably the past 4 or so years that I've really embraced a "learning community" and I know that I NEED it to promote

	longevity in this work, especially as I commit myself to being a culturally relevant practitioner. THESE TIMES have exacerbated the oppression and inequity in America, and even more so, I need communities, even in collaboration of networks and communities in order to thrive.
Beth	I think of the word “community” as “with” “unity”, so being part of a learning community means participating with a group of people who have the same, or “unified” goals. In today’s world, those goals need to focus on social justice, acknowledging the role of white privilege and what it has meant through history and to the future.
Gwen	To be a part of a learning community means having the space and opportunity to voice opinions, fears, hopes, action plans, etc. among a group of individuals who value the space as a learning forum and exhibit the desire and willingness to create change for the better.
Allie	Being a part of a learning community in these times means we have a huge responsibility in our classrooms and beyond. We must be brave and facilitate a safe space where we can have a real meaningful dialogue with our children, invite members of the community into the classrooms and not shy away from “difficult or uncomfortable” questions.
Rolyn	It means that we are privileged with the responsibility to learn more so that we can help empower our students to be vigilant and confident for racial injustice. Giving them the skills to show the importance of language and how they can use it to forward their convictions.
An	I believe that being part of a learning community in <i>these times</i> is testing our limits and challenging what it means to teach. In one sense, we have the challenge of what we have known to be our teaching space. In another sense, we have the challenge of having genuine discussions about real issues with our students. This entire experience has been uncomfortable overall, but a lot of us, as a community are having some shared experiences.
Amanda	I’ve been thinking a lot about my years singing in a feminist, social justice choir back in Cincinnati. There are typically not so many places in choral music where the entire choir can pause for breath at the same time. Instead, we employ staggered breathing, so that the sound can continue while each of us breathes, as needed. In my section, we would sometimes, for a particularly difficult song, even map out which of us would breathe at which point to ensure that all the notes were always fully sustained and supported. That, to me, is what a learning community does. It creates a space for people to work and learn together, and a space that supports each member, so that when someone needs to pause for a breath or to rest, the work can continue unabated, fully sustained and supported by the collective of members.
Geena	At this time, my community of fellow educators has become a safe haven for me, giving me strength to continue struggling ahead despite the new

	catastrophes that continually seem to pop up. I would be lost without my connections from Penn GSE and PhilWP right now – overcome with a sense of deep disappointment in our country and my school district. I am leaning on my teacher friends to help me brainstorm ways to disrupt the racism in my district and failure of our country to value the students in my classroom and their families. I am continually inspired by the work and ideas of people in PhilWP, and I am eternally grateful to be part of this group of profoundly thoughtful, critical, and insightful people.
Trey	Preparing for two PhilWP institutes this summer has provided me with an opportunity to stay connected—and to find inspiration, hope, and resolve to do more—during a time that I've been really isolated. I also have been able to reach out to teachers I have met through networks like PhilWP to find ways to better understand what African American community organizers are calling for. PhilWP connections have allowed me to find ways to amplify the work of activists, who include teachers and students.
Melissa	Being a part of a learning community during these times can feel both supportive and like an obligation. We have a real opportunity to get better together and think really critically about the way that we engage with racial literacy and social justice teaching and the way in which we engage our students. This is also an obligation and space for us to hold ourselves and our community responsible.
Kisha	Being a part of a learning community in these times means that now more than ever we need to come together and support one another. With having to remote teach it has been a challenge adapting to being out of the classroom, but being connected to others I am able to support others that may be struggling.
Ariel	Being a part of a learning community during these times is critical for change not only our learning communities, but beyond our bigger world. We can learn, grow, share, and start to have conversations that may be hard, but ultimately know that we are able to learn and grow to be the change that we so desperately need in America.
Jennifer	Being a part of a learning community in this time means that I have a space to share thoughts and concerns with people who are like-minded. In my teaching experience, in school, sometimes its hard to find the space to have open and honest dialogues about the issues that face the community and world in which we live. The learning community gives me this opportunity and space to unwind and learn from others.
Beth	Being supported. The PhilWP learning community has continually pushed me to do the hard work of self reflection and examination. I have never been part of a community like it before. It gets me through my darkest days teaching to know that there are educators out there that believe that inquiry should guide us.

Judy	Making the space to build together for the future. Such a powerful time to be part of a community with deep roots, open to new ideas and people each year so that “in these times” can both reference our ancestors and what they have given us AND allow us to design a new way forward together. In these times, means that each of us can begin anew to make the change/be the change we need.
Helen	This is the moment in which we can hold one another accountable - particularly as allies - and that can only happen in community. A community in which we trust one another not only to support one another but also to push one another along our individual journeys toward making a more just and equitable society. It is in community where we can share and provide space for those whose voices have been unheard or under-heard and we can all become better by acknowledging and having a growing empathy for those around us. This is not to say that the role of the ally - particularly white allies - is central. Rather it is in these communities of learning that we are able to better learn, to sit back, but also to push one another and speak out against injustice and hatred.
Emmy	What it has meant in the learning communities I’m already a part of is a need to provide space to process peoples’ emotions before we get to “business” (and the business of curricular planning has been fundamentally changed by both the pandemic and the protests of the last week). It also has meant providing spaces and information to the learning communities of my classes with students to process and plan action based on their responses to the events around them.
Zoe	Being a part of a learning community in this time means accountability- holding ourselves to the standards we know it is our job to meet. Being a part of a learning community means a commitment to doing better and better being, and building a shared knowledge/ understanding that enables us to do that. Being a part of a learning community in this time means building our muscles of speaking and listening and knowing when it is your turn. Being a part of a learning community also means that it is space to think collaboratively about what our future needs to look like and how we get there, making sure everyone--particularly those who have been previously denied it-- has a seat at that table. Building a team of of thinking partners makes us all stronger in our practice and in our ability to support our students.
Diane	It means never being alone, having critical friends, thinking partners to help you navigate a path forward in stressful times, helping you do the right thing even when you face what appers to be monumental constraints, courage to go against the grain
Hannah	Learning communities need to be safe spaces for learners. Educators need to be willing to have ‘courageous conversations’ about race, justice, etc. Educators need to acknowledge that we are a system and part of the

	problem in systemic racism. Educators have a major responsibility to change that system from within.
Javaha	Being part of a learning community at this time means that is essential to be an active listener.
Lisa	Being a part of a learning community means holding our teacher peers accountable and working toward change in our school environments. This can look like a lot of different things. Making space for challenging conversations, challenging the norms in our school buildings, questioning and building curiosity around current practices with our students and with our staff. I think now more than ever this is the time to become aware of our own bias and call out inequities in our school environments. As teachers we are in positions of power and where we go from here could make a huge impact on the future of public education.
Jen	Being a member of a learning community invites us to render ourselves vulnerable...to arrive, every day, with the hope that our inquiries, observations, and connections (both “textual” and personal) challenge us to be better than the previous day. We must validate and challenge ourselves and our community members to see new ways of being and knowing...more intentional ways of moving through the world. Our collective and individual knowledge must be used to support, reflect, and reconsider. Penn GSE and PhilWP have encouraged me to join spaces that foster relationships over time, space, and distance. These incredible and inspiring teachers have supported me through difficult conversations, role shifts, and moments of doubt/confusion/emotional upheaval.
Debbie	Being responsible for each other. To have safety to express doubts and fears. To honestly talk about hard questions that are facing us in these times.
Mary	Being a part of a learning community during these times is critical as an educator. Having the space to communicate, collaborate, educate, inspire is important since we are helping shape the future. In order to move forward as a society, we must consciously take time to learn and continue to move forward.
Jada	Being a part of a learning community means being able to share ideas and opinions, not only about education but also current events that can affect that. Now is the time to have conversations that should have been had years ago in regards to systemic racism and America. Hopefully we will collaborate together in order to change the curriculum that is currently limited.
Katie	Being part of a learning community in these times means having a place to process thoughts with others who are both supportive and challenging. It's a place to continue to be accountable to, which remains especially important in today's climate. It also is a place to keep ourselves grounded in what we believe to be important and to use our skills and knowledge to grow the larger

	community. We also have to acknowledge that people are coming from difficult situations with different perspectives, so it's even more important than ever to have critical conversations and learn and grow.
--	---