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Overall, I have made substantial progress towards my goals and developing my toolbox of collaborative strategies. My two goals are to one, seek elaboration from other members to see why and how they are reasoning, and two, to seek elaboration by relating to familiar events or asking how material is understood by others. I see these two goals as centered around questioning- which is deeply rooted in the skills of communication and listening. Over the course of the past few months, I have made significant gains on my ability to seek clarity from group members, participate in collaborative teams, and evaluate my progress through monitoring processes. In the checklist below, I have highlighted in green the areas in which I marked as self-improvement. I am thrilled to visualize that there are many areas in which I have improved. If I have not yet rated myself as a 4 or a 5, I am more aware of my weaknesses. This class has been eye-opening both personally and professionally, and for this last journal entry, I am gravitating towards ruminating about two distinct learning areas that are reflected in two facets of my professional life.

This semester, I was working professionally within a virtual environment while grant writing for a team in Montana, while also exploring the Makerspace and STEAM communities here in Vermont. While I reflect more thoroughly on the Montana virtual team in my Applied Project reflection, I found myself wanting to reflect on my goal progress through these two lenses. When approaching this virtual project, I knew I wanted to work on my personal goals while implementing collaborative strategies. It turned out that the two easily fit together, and I

was able to work on my questioning and listening goals while working with this team across the country. When choosing Google Hangouts for the technology to virtually communicate, I knew that "... the technology should increase knowledge sharing, manage tasks more efficiently, delegate work in an efficient manner, and decrease misunderstandings and ambiguity among team members..." (Roy, 2012, pg 5). Google Hangouts allowed the team to interact face-to-face, which made it easier for me to implement my listening and questioning goals. When working on my first goal, to seek elaboration from other members to see why and how they are reasoning, I realized (through this project and other class reflections) that I have been practicing the complexities of active listening, and using subsequent follow up questions. As we have been discussing, "Listening is a complex process of selecting, attending to, understanding, recalling and responding to verbal and nonverbal messages, but its effective use includes many challenges that can be addressed by using specific listening improvement strategies." (Friend and Cook, 2017). By interacting face-to-face in my virtual team, I was able to practice the responses to both verbal statements and nonverbal cues, and ultimately implement my questioning skills.

The second professional context I have practicing my chosen skills is within exploring the Makerspace and STEAM communities here in Vermont. In Montana, I was lucky enough to work within a collaborative environment of educational systems, non-profits, scientists and entrepreneurs that were all eager to collaborate to improve STEM education in the state. I was eager to start exploring (and navigating!) the Makerspace/STEM education communities in Vermont, and was ready to use the collaborative skills to establish connections. I found myself having ample opportunity to utilize my questioning skills, and therefore practice my goals, in multiple professional meetings over the past few months. I have met with team members at the

local Generator makerspace, attended the VTed conference at Killington resort, and started a project in another class to map and connect educators interested in Project Based Learning, Makerspaces and STEAM education in the state. I sent out a survey to educators all over the state (so far, only have 30 responses) to gauge the interest and needs of STEAM educators, especially in rural areas. Montana and Vermont are quite similar, in some ways, in the needs of their rural educators and students, but also very culturally and structurally different. I was able to use the questioning skills I have been practicing to ask others about their decisions, the rationale behind decisions, and sought elaboration about similar situations I have experienced. These skills directly helped me make connections with others in the field in Vermont, and have helped guide my conversations and meetings with new colleagues and potential mentors.

As I continue to reflect on where this interest in Makerspaces will lead me, I often think about the best way to present my data I am collecting. The article we read on Data Based Decision Making resonated with me for many reasons, but this quote reverberated for about a week after reading- "... Another reason for setting norms in that many teachers have very little experience looking at data and may lack confidence in their ability to understand the numbers. They may resist participating in the data discussions out of fear that they do not know how to analyze data the "right way"..." (*Data Based Decision Making*, 2015, pg 22). As I think about how to visually present the data I am collecting through this project and future endeavors, I now know that it must be presented in a way that is rooted in empathy and collaborative for educators. As many educators know, "...the most significant factor in which students learn well is found in their interactions with educators in school", which makes our mission even more important (Hord and Summers, 2008). While my goal is to be involved in the complex and rewarding

process of supporting STEAM educators, we learned about the benefits of involving collaborative practices in the ways teachers learn. As Villa stated, "...collaborative teams and teaming processes have come to be viewed as vehicles for inventing the solutions that traditional bureaucratic school structures have failed to conceptualize." (Villa, 1992, pg 74). While I still have much to learn about best practices and finding a position that allows me to do the work I am interested in, the material we covered in this class directly relates to my current interactions and potential future career path.

Through this class, we have learned about the importance of collaboration in educational systems. In interactions with families, students, educators, administrators and other third party entities, utilizing collaborative practices is essential. I truly believe that this class, and this (sometimes painful!) process of self-reflection has allowed me to become a better listener and collaborator. I am grateful for the opportunities this class has given me!

Forming Skills: Trust Building
(a.k.a. Stage 1, Dependency and Inclusion)

	(pre)	(post)
I observe the meeting schedule identified by the group.	5	5
I arrive at meetings on time.	5	5
I stay for the duration of the meeting.	4	4
I participate in the establishment of the group's goal.	4	5
I share individual personal goals.	3	4
I encourage everyone to participate.	3	4
I use members' names.	3	4
I do not use "put-downs."	5	5
I observe norms developed by the group.	5	5
I observe agendas developed by the group.	5	5
I make an effort to learn more about each other.	3	4

Functioning Skills: Communication and Distributed Leadership
(a.k.a. Stage 2, Counterdependency & Fight or Storming)

	(pre)	(post)
I share ideas.	3	4
I share feelings when appropriate.	2	3
I share materials or resources.	4	4
I practice excellent listening skills.	3	4
I share volunteer for roles which help the group accomplish its task (e.g., facilitator, timekeeper).	5	5
I volunteer for roles which help to maintain a harmonious group (e.g., encouraging others to participate).	3	4
I clarify the purpose of our meetings.	5	5
I clarify the procedures the group uses during meetings (e.g., use of agendas, roles, etc.).	4	5
I set or call attention to time limits.	5	5

I offer suggestions as to how to accomplish the task effectively and efficiently.	5	5
assistance when needed.	3	4
I praise team members' contributions.	3	4
I ask team members' opinions.	3	4
I use head nods, smiles, and other facial expressions to show interest/approval.	4	4
I offer to explain or clarify.	3	4
I paraphrase other team members' contributions.	3	4
I energize the group with humor, ideas, or enthusiasm when motivation is low or when tension is present.	5	5
I check for understanding of the concepts discussed.	4	5
I summarize outcomes before moving to the next agenda item.	4	5
I use communication systems identified by the group for communicating between meetings.	5	5

Formulating Skills: Decision-Making and Creative Problem Solving (a.k.a. Stage 3, Trust and Structure or Norming)

Self Self

(pre) (post)

I seek accuracy of information by adding to or questioning summaries.	4	4
I seek elaboration by relating to familiar events or asking how material is understood by others.	2	4
I ask for additional information or rationale.	4	4
I seek clever ways of remembering ideas and facts (e.g. posters, visuals, notes, public agendas, mnemonics).	1	3
I ask other members why and how they are reasoning.	1	3
I encourage the assigning of specific roles to facilitate better group functioning (e.g., observer).	3	5
I diagnose group difficulties regarding tasks.	4	4
I diagnose group difficulties regarding interpersonal issues.	2	3
I clearly understand the process by which our team makes decisions (e.g., consensus, voting, etc.).	3	4

I clearly understand the role of leadership in our team.	4	5
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I encourage the use of multiple solutions to problems through the use of creative problem-solving strategies.	4	4
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Fermenting Skills: Creativity and Conflict Management
(a.k.a. Stage 4, Work and Productivity or Performing)

	(pre)	(post)
I communicate the rationale for ideas, decisions or conclusions.	3	4
I ask for justification of others' ideas or conclusions.	3	4
I extend or build upon others' ideas or conclusions.	4	4
I generate additional solutions or strategies.	4	4
I test the reality of solutions by planning and assessing the feasibility of their implementation.	4	4
I see ideas from other persons' perspectives.	3	4
I criticize ideas without criticizing people.	3	4
I differentiate differences of opinion when there is a disagreement.	4	4
I perceive that the group is aligned and successful in achieving its common goals.	3	4
I take pride in the accomplishments of the group.	4	5
I perceive the group to have achieved parity in decision-making, leadership, and fulfillment of tasks.	4	4

Works Cited

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