

## Ocotillo Paper: Quality of Learning Review

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The 1997 Learning @ Maricopa.edu document really asked us simply to have a dialogue yet it recognized the significance of having more than a conversation to make learning "our common denominator." Therefore, we are empowered to continue to search for meaning and action in what the Learning document recognized as a transformational journey.

In 1997, the Maricopa focus on learning was highlighted by the publication of Learning @ Maricopa.edu. This document defined ideas on learning with the intent that these would stimulate a continual dialogue on learning. Bob Bendotti and Donna Tannehill stressed in the "learning" document that there should be a way to assess the "culture of learning" within the Maricopa District. They asked for reflection on a series of issues:

1. To what degree is learning: talked about, inquired into, reflected on, documented by self and by peers, reviewed by students and peers, valued by leadership and peers, recognized by peers and the community, and rewards?
2. How would you assess the culture of learning in your department, your college, or in the MCCD? (Don't ask.....Spotty.....Systemic)

The document recognizes that change the "culture" on an individual level is easy whereas changing the "culture" at an organization level is another matter entirely. The intent of the "Learning" document was to be a catalyst for substantive dialogue about learning. The question is whether we have instigated and sustained that dialogue about learning, and, more importantly, have we helped faculty and others who support learning to "research, develop, and/or innovate" to focus on learning outcomes?

The Ocotillo sub team of Gloria Stahmer, Elizabeth Jacobs, Mary Long, and Richard Effland focused on the intent of the "learning" document as we approached the topic of Quality of Learning. Clearly, it is important to identify the expectations that arise from the very definition of "learning" itself. One of our intents was to illuminate what faculty across the MCCD considered learning to be in 2003. It is important to recognize that a lot of new research on learning in a pedagogical sense has been done since 1997. It is equally clear that faculty across the district have been at least on individual levels exploring the very meaning of learning and incorporating it in differing ways in their instruction. Therefore, it is meaningful to now revision "what learning is" to Maricopa faculty. The following information was provided. It is recognized this is a limited sample of Maricopa faculty, but it is equally clear from a review of what was submitted to the sub team that there are some very distinct commonalities to what is presented. Learning is a **process**. It involves **active** participation. Learning is a **change**. Learning involves **new information**. Learning means **applying** new information. These are some of the very essential pieces that crosscut a number of these definitions. (See Appendix One for the definitions.)

There are a number of questions that can be explored if we truly wish to foster a “continuing” dialogue on learning – or should we say quality of learning. The first of these focuses on where we do have a dialogue and where that dialogue has the most meaning:

1. How do discussions about the quality of learning and learning in general? Occur on your campus? (You may want to share the context in which these discussions occur.)

The Learning @ Maricopa.edu document recognized the importance of changing the culture into which this continuing dialogue on learning should take place – the organizational culture. The following two questions are posed as a way to explore if Maricopa has a philosophy of learning that occurs at the college and district level. There can be at one level the recognition of our commitment to learning, but the real measure is how the organizational culture has incorporated and operationalized that commitment. In other words, does our commitment to learning really shape and influence decision-making at the very core of the organization?

2. How are these discussions tied to decision-making? (You may want to consider how they are related to problem-solving, strategic planning, course design, curriculum or whatever.)

3. How does the relationship between your discussion of quality of learning and the decision-making process influence (enhance, inhibit, ensure, encourage) quality of learning?

While the Ocotillo sub team on Quality of Learning recognized the importance of the 1997 Learning @ Maricopa.edu document, we were taken by the series of questions it posed for us that were so much at the thrust of what we ourselves were asking. The Learning document really asked us simply to have this dialogue yet it recognized the significance of having more than a conversation to make learning “out common denominator.” Therefore, we are empowered to continue to search for meaning and action in what the Learning document recognized as a transformational journey.

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