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I have worked in the EC sector for over 30 years and it has taken me quite some time to learn how to create a community of learners within my workplace. I have discovered that I am not the 'be all and end all' of everything! That it takes a team of very different people with very different skill sets to create something magical. Creating a community of learners requires a dedication to creating relationships with people and understanding what they bring to the table. It requires not only an understanding of their talents, special abilities, likes and dislikes, but the ability to place trust and value in each individual. When educators can truly feel this, they really fly and feel that they can be creative in their thoughts and ideas. The challenge is to allow them to fly and not be tempted to 'clip their wings'.

I currently work in a large service with 52 educators, and I know that if we are to achieve an effective workplace, then we all need to learn together, even if the area of learning is somewhat unfamiliar. An example of this occurred one afternoon at a pedagogical leaders meeting when we were brainstorming future goals, ideas and 'where to next' topics. Two educators began a passionate discussion about a TV documentary about the effects young children had on dementia patients and comments were made around how this could happen at our service. Other educators were enthused by the topic and so began the amazing journey with our 'Treasuring Life' program (bringing children and people living with dementia together). Educators were encouraged to research, document and put in place a plan which would work for our particular service.

Educators researched the topic of dementia and how contact with the elderly could have an amazing reciprocal outcome for them and our children. While educators had a great idea, we had to work and learn together and I found that my role was that of encourager, cheer leader and scaffolder of their existing knowledge as we all learnt together about the world of a person living with dementia. We currently attend a small centre for people with dementia every week with a group of six children. The results have been staggering and I wouldn't have believed the change in the clients or the beautiful empathy and compassion demonstrated by our children if I had not listened, encouraged and supported the educators in this project. The end result has seen real transformation in some educators as they have witnessed their own idea, research and project work come to life.

So why create a community of learners? Because 'The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones that do'. (Steve Jobs)