

## Work Collaborative Forum 2: Exploring the Double Diamond

16th September 2025

### Executive Summary

Our second forum brought together our growing community to explore what possibilities exist for schools leading their own change. Through a discussion on the double diamond model, we discovered together the tensions between thorough community processes and school realities, the foundations that enable sustainable transformation, and the practical support that nurtures rather than burdens educators.

The forum revealed both promise and honest challenges in community-driven change, with participants sharing real examples of schools finding their own success alongside thoughtful concerns about what's truly feasible. This summary reflects our open source ethos - all ideas, frameworks, and resources developed by Work Collaborative are freely available for adaptation and use by the education community.

### What Brought Us Together (Continued)

Building on our August foundations, our September gathering deepened our exploration of how schools can trust their own wisdom for leading change. The session began with moments that reminded us why authentic community matters - a dog joining the call and Dutch cows creating a perfectly reasonable delay. These moments showed us that genuine community includes all of who we are, not just our professional roles.

### The Double Diamond Model for Change



We explored Work Collaborative's adaptation of the [British Design Council's double diamond](#), considering how we'd made it more human for educational settings. The model moves from a sponsor's perceived challenge through community discovery and connection, towards defining and aligning around shared goals, then developing and learning together before delivering and sustaining solutions.

The concept of "resonant change" offered a powerful way of thinking about what we're hoping to create. Like a Tibetan singing bowl, we want change that resonates through time (**lasting**), through people (**connecting**), and through space (**anchoring**).

## Hearing the Reality: Voices from Experience

Our most valuable learning emerged when forum members brought their lived experiences into conversation with the model. What became clear is that schools already know many challenges they face - the question is how to create space for that wisdom when urgent timelines and stretched capacity create pressure for quick fixes.

One participant shared experiences from Dutch schools, describing the frustration of seeing "quick fixes" and tick-box approaches that miss the deeper community strengths already present. Yet they also offered hope through a detailed example of a Montessori school that successfully transformed their approach to formative assessment over two years. What made the difference? Leaders who trusted their community enough to focus deeply rather than chase multiple initiatives.

Research insights revealed the growing cynicism among educators who've experienced changes where "decisions have already been made" before their voices are heard. This cynicism isn't resistance to change itself - it's a natural response to processes that don't value what teachers already understand about their students and context.

## Exploring What's Possible at Different Scales

A forum member with extensive experience across schools offered the insight that community-led approaches can work at many different scales. The key isn't the size of the change - it's creating space for the people affected to share what they already know and shape what happens next.

This connected to reflections that each change experience either builds or erodes a school community's confidence in their own capability. Rather than being about individual changes, this is about fostering the conditions where schools trust themselves to navigate whatever comes next.

## Considering External Support Differently

A compelling example emerged of working with a school that initially framed their challenge as teachers "not holding students accountable" for speaking English. Through community exploration, they discovered the real issue was linguistic homogeneity requiring different pedagogical approaches - knowledge they already possessed but needed space to surface.

This sparked thoughtful discussion about external support. What if external providers asked different questions? Instead of "here's what we offer," what possibilities open up when we start with "tell us about your journey" and "what do you already know about this challenge?"

The conversation explored whether schools might benefit from facilitation support - not someone with the answers, but someone skilled in creating space for communities to discover their own solutions. What would it look like to train coaches in asking powerful questions rather than delivering solutions?

## Learning About Our Own Journey

Through our Miro board exploration, we began articulating what we see as our own challenges:

- How might we support schools to use approaches that genuinely work for them?
- What possibilities exist for connecting as a community in ways that feel productive and purposeful?
- How can we explore together the foundational skills around trust, listening, and communication?

These questions showed us practicing what we believe - using community inquiry to understand our own direction rather than deciding it in advance.

## Questions That Keep Us Learning

Several areas emerged for continued exploration:

### About Implementation:

- What possibilities exist for balancing thorough processes with school realities?
- How might we help schools recognise which changes are ready for community-led approaches?
- What would it look like to build foundations for trust before change pressures arise?

## About Support:

- How might we explore different ways of supporting schools without creating dependency?
- What possibilities exist for helping providers ask better questions rather than impose solutions?
- How could technology support schools in structured self-inquiry?

## About Our Mission:

- How do we ensure we're developing something that genuinely serves rather than burdens educators?
- What voices might we still be missing in our conversations?
- How can we better connect theory with the lived experience of schools?

## Stories of Change in Action

The Montessori school example offered rich insight into community-led transformation. Starting with eight teachers and growing to twenty, the school committed to focusing on formative assessment for three years. Leaders said no to competing priorities, created buddy systems for peer support, and worked at multiple levels - individual classrooms, small groups, and whole-school professional development.

The result? A school where you can feel the change - teachers think, talk, and act differently. This wasn't about implementing someone else's solution. It was about a community deciding what mattered most and building from their own strengths.

## Next Steps in Our Journey

1. **Continued Learning Together:** Our October forum will bring in external expertise alongside our collaborative inquiry.
2. **Exploring Resource Development:** Interest emerged in white papers, practical guides, coaching approaches, and case study collections.
3. **Considering Question Banks:** We're exploring whether structured question sets might support schools or facilitators in community-led processes.
4. **Technology Possibilities:** Conversations began about how technology might support schools in asking themselves powerful questions.

## Our Collaborative Approach

This forum reminded us that we're balancing vision with reality - imagining schools confidently leading change whilst acknowledging the pressures of stretched leaders and urgent timelines. We're committed to developing approaches that genuinely serve schools rather than creating another model that looks good on paper but fails in practice.

We're exploring collaborative working groups focused on specific initiatives whilst maintaining alignment under our shared purpose. This allows us to build on diverse expertise - from research to hands-on improvement work - whilst ensuring our efforts remain connected.

The evidence is clear that change works best when it comes from within, and the same principle applies to Work Collaborative itself. Your ongoing questions, challenges, and real-world experiences continue shaping what we're building together.

## Forum Participants

### Online Meeting Details:

- Date: Monday, 16th September 2025
- Time: 9:00-10:30 BST

### Attendees:

- Work Collaborative co-founders
- Educational researchers
- School improvement practitioners
- Coaches and consultants
- School leaders and teachers

## Open Source Commitment

This document is published in the spirit of Work Collaborative's commitment to open source collaboration. All content, ideas, frameworks, and resources developed through our forums are made freely available to the global education community.

We encourage adaptation, modification, and sharing of these materials to support schools and education organisations worldwide. This document will be housed in the Work Collaborative open source library at [workcollaborative.com/library](https://workcollaborative.com/library), alongside other resources developed by our community.

Our open source approach reflects our core belief that sustainable change in education emerges through community collaboration rather than proprietary solutions.

*This summary utilises AI to synthesise contributions from our forum discussion and Miro board reflections. It represents the collective thinking of our community and is intended as a working document for feedback and refinement.*

**Next forum meeting: Tuesday, 21st October 2025**

*For more information about Work Collaborative or to access our open source library, visit: [workcollaborative.com](https://workcollaborative.com)*