Building Your Living Classroom Team

A Conversation Guide to Support Roles, Responsibilities and Collaboration

RIA Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging
Enhancing Life

cesba

www.livingclassroom.ca

What is the purpose of this tool?

Living Classrooms (LC) are built and sustained through strong collaboration between people across education providers and long-term care homes. This resource is designed to support partners in having intentional, ongoing discussions about the people, roles, and shared responsibilities needed to support an effective LC program. This guide helps partners explore:

- How roles and responsibilities are defined and shared
- How curriculum integration is planned and supported
- How communication, coordination, and decision-making work in practice

How do I use this tool?

Living Classrooms vary widely in structure, staffing, and delivery models. This guide is intended to be flexible, practical, and revisited over time. Partners can use this guide to support early planning conversations, onboard new team members or partners, and check-in on roles and responsibilities at key points (e.g. the start of a new cohort or when program changes occur).

Partners are encouraged to focus on the sections most relevant to their current stage, use the guiding questions to identify areas of alignment, clarify gaps or assumptions, and document decisions, points of contact, and follow-up actions. Depending on the topic, different people may need to be involved in the conversation. Each section highlights key people to involve to support meaningful and effective discussions. Partners may choose to work through one section at a time and revisit discussions over time as the partnership evolves.

Each section includes a Conversation Capture table to support discussion and documentation. These tables can be used during or after conversations to record what this looks like in your Living Classroom, capture decisions, and identify next steps. Over time, they can also be revisited to support ongoing alignment and program evolution.

Additional Resources

Supporting tools and templates are available on the Living Classroom Resource Hub.

Visit: **livingclassroom.ca/resources**

Partnership & Engagement

Why this matters

Strong partnerships rely on clear, predictable communication and shared understanding of how collaborating happens in practice – across roles, functions, and levels of both organizations.

Signals of strong alignment may include:

- Defined points of contact between partners (e.g. instructor to staff, coordinator to manager, leadership to leadership)
- Regular meetings scheduled based on purpose and level (e.g. leadership quarterly; instructors/staff more frequently during active programs)
- Shared tools to support coordination and communication
- Clear documentation of decisions and follow-ups (e.g. agendas, notes, action logs)

Key people to involve

Consider who is best positioned to contribute to this conversation across both partners:

- Education provider leadership and faculty
- LTC leadership and management
- Designated LC points of contact
- Operations staff

Guiding questions for this conversation

The questions below are not an exhaustive list. Focus on what's most relevant to your context:

- How often do partners meet and at what level (operational, instructional, leadership)?
- Who are the designated points of contact at each level, and what is their role?
- What information should be communicated regularly, and when?
- What communication tools are used (e.g. shared calendars, staff boards, email)?
- How are residents, families, and team members informed of or involved in LC activities?
- How are successes and challenges related to integration and collaboration communicated and documented?

Conversation Capture: Partnership & Engagement

Use the table below to document reflections, decisions, and follow-up actions related to this area. Refer to the examples from practice for inspiration, recognizing that approaches will vary by partnership.

Conversation Focus	What does this look like in our LC?	Notes / Action Items
Communication structures & shared accountability		
Day-to-day coordination		
Shared tools		
Engagement (resident, family, team member)		
Sharing successes & challenges		

Examples from practice (optional)

- Regular partner meetings (weekly, monthly, or quarterly)
- Shared calendars for activities and equipment needs
- Highlights of LC activities in existing newsletters or announcements

Curriculum & Program Design

Why this matters

Curriculum integration is at the heart of the Living Classroom model. Strong collaboration between education providers and LTC homes helps ensure learning is embedded early and often, aligns with curriculum outcomes, and adds values for students, team members, and residents.

Signals of strong alignment may include:

- Integration activities are co-developed and regularly reviewed and updated by both partners
- Curriculum is organized to support early and often integration
- Learning opportunities align with curriculum outcomes and LTC priorities

Key people to involve

Consider who is best positioned to contribute to this conversation across both partners:

- Faculty / instructors
- LC coordinator(s) or designated point of contact
- LTC leadership or management
- LTC team members involved in learning activities

Guiding questions for this conversation

The questions below are not an exhaustive list. Focus on what's most relevant to your context:

- Do we maintain a shared list of integration activities (e.g. departments or staff involved, suggested activities)? Who updates it?
- How is integrative learning embedded early and often in the program?
- Which integration activities complement or replace classroom or lab learning?
- How do we support integrative learning while students wait for vulnerable sector checks or immunization clearance?
- Where can curriculum content be aligned or reorganized to prepare students for integration sooner?

Conversation Capture: Curriculum & Program Design

Use the table below to document reflections, decisions, and follow-up actions related to this area.
Refer to the examples from practice for inspiration, recognizing that approaches will vary by partnership.

Conversation Focus	What does this look like in our LC?	Notes / Action Items
Integration planning		
Early & often integration		
Curriculum alignment		
Managing barriers		
Points of contact		

Examples from practice (optional)

- Standing integration opportunity lists shared with education partners
- Guest speakers from within the home or community
- Integration activities during “waiting periods” (e.g. observation, projects, resident engagement)

Operations & Finance

Why this matters

Clear operational roles, decision-making pathways, and financial understandings help ensure the Living Classroom runs smoothly and minimizes disruption. Clarity around costs, shared resources, and financial agreements helps prevent misunderstandings and supports long-term sustainability.

Signals of strong alignment may include:

- Clear operational contacts and escalation pathways
- Shared understanding of decision-making processes
- Defined agreements related to shared costs, purchases, and resource ownership
- Documented financial roles and responsibilities (e.g. memorandum of understanding [MOU] or enhanced agreement)
- Structured onboarding for new faculty or team members within the LC model

Key people to involve

Consider who is best positioned to contribute to this conversation across both partners:

- LTC leadership or management
- Education provider administrators
- Finance or administrative leads
- Faculty and LC coordinator(s)
- Operations or facilities staff

Guiding questions for this conversation

The questions below are not an exhaustive list. Focus on what's most relevant to your context:

- Who are the key contacts (weekdays and after hours)?
- How are operational issues handled (e.g. access, maintenance, supplies)?
- What is the escalation pathway for unresolved issues?
- What is the onboarding process for new faculty and team members within the LC model?
- How are decisions made and communicated between partners?
- What agreements are in place to clearly define shared costs and purchases?
- Is there a formal MOU or enhanced agreement outlining financial responsibilities?

Conversation Capture: Operations & Finance

Use the table below to document reflections, decisions, and follow-up actions related to this area.
Refer to the examples from practice for inspiration, recognizing that approaches will vary by partnership.

Conversation Focus	What does this look like in our LC?	Notes / Action Items
Operational clarity & financial sustainability		
Access & logistics		
Decision-making		
Escalation & support		
Faculty onboarding		

Examples from practice (optional)

- Orientation resources for new instructors
- Clear documentation of operational roles
- Shadowing or transition periods for new faculty

Evaluation & Sustainability

Why this matters

Ongoing evaluation and shared planning help strengthen Living Classroom partnerships and support long-term sustainability beyond initial start-up phases.

Signals of strong alignment may include:

- Regular reflection on integration activities and program outcomes
- Shared ownership of and contribution to evaluation processes
- Intentional planning for long-term sustainability

Key people to involve

Consider who is best positioned to contribute to this conversation across both partners:

- Education provider leadership and faculty
- LC coordinator(s)
- LTC leadership or management
- Evaluation leads

Guiding questions for this conversation

The questions below are not an exhaustive list. Focus on what's most relevant to your context:

- How do we evaluate integration activities and overall program success?
- Who leads or contributes to evaluation efforts?
- How are evaluation findings shared and used to inform changes?
- How do partners engage in cross-organization planning for program longevity?
- What onboarding considerations (e.g. staffing, space, cleaning and maintenance, resident and family engagement) need to be planned over time?

Conversation Capture: Evaluation & Sustainability

Use the table below to document reflections, decisions, and follow-up actions related to this area. Refer to the examples from practice for inspiration, recognizing that approaches will vary by partnership.

Conversation Focus	What does this look like in our LC?	Notes / Action Items
Evaluation approach		
Reflection & feedback		
Shared ownership		
Professional development		
Sustainability planning		

Examples from practice (optional)

- Post-integration activity reflections
- Shared student, staff, and resident surveys
- Coordinated professional development opportunities

Promotion & Media

Why this matters

Thoughtful promotion helps build shared understanding of the Living Classroom model and highlights the value of the partnership to students, team members, residents, and the broader community.

Signals of strong alignment may include:

- Joint promotion that reflects each partner's strengths
- Consistent messaging across organizations
- Shared celebration of successes

Key people to involve

Consider who is best positioned to contribute to this conversation across both partners:

- Communication or marketing staff
- Education provider leadership
- LTC leadership or designated spokesperson(s)
- Program leads

Guiding questions for this conversation

The questions below are not an exhaustive list. Focus on what's most relevant to your context:

- How do both partners currently promote the Living Classroom?
- What strengths does each partner bring to outreach and communications?
- How do both partners coordinate messaging while respecting each partner's identity?
- Who acts as a media or communications point of contact?
- How are opportunities shared?
- Is there an agreed process for notifying the RIA of media coverage to support cross-promotion?

Conversation Capture: Promotion & Media

Use the table below to document reflections, decisions, and follow-up actions related to this area.
Refer to the examples from practice for inspiration, recognizing that approaches will vary by partnership.

Conversation Focus	What does this look like in our LC?	Notes / Action Items
Shared promotion		
Partner strengths		
Coordinated messaging		
Celebrating successes		
Media contacts		

Examples from practice (optional)

- Open houses or community events
- Media features or social media posts
- Student/resident stories or testimonials
- Annual reports

Keeping the Conversation Going

Why this matters

Living Classroom partnerships evolve over time. As cohorts change, staff move in and out of roles, and programs adapt, regular check-ins help partners stay aligned and responsive.

Revisiting these conversations supports shared understanding, clarifies roles, and helps partners adjust how they work together so the Living Classroom continues to meet the needs of students, residents, team members, and organizations.

Check-in prompts

Use these prompts to guide reflection and conversation at key moments (e.g. the start of a new cohort, after a program change, or when challenges arise):

- What's working well right now?
- What challenges are we experiencing?
- Where are roles unclear or overlapping?
- What has changed since our last check-in?
- What needs to be revisited before the next cohort?

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If you have any questions on this resource and the Living Classroom program, please contact livingclassroom@the-ria.ca.

Some of this material was adapted and updated from the Shared Learning Environments for PSW Education: The Living Classroom Implementation Guide for Colleges and Long-Term Care Homes.