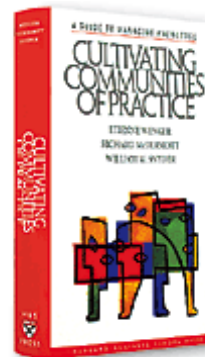




Communities of Practice 101

A Guide to Managing Knowledge Cultivating Communities of Practice

Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William Snyder



Who has Communities of Practice at the ECSU?

- BVI
- DHH
 - ASL Share Shop
- EHDI
- PI OHD TBI
- AT
- DCD
- OT/PT
- Speech Language
- Regional and State CoPs
- 25+ years of existence as networks
- Federal Government Funded
- MN Department of Education (MDE) & Commissioner approve
- “Flow Through Dollars” for regional projects
- Target Projects at state level



Who is part of these CoPs?

Ingrid Aasan

Region 11 Low Incidence Facilitator &
Special Education Director for Metro
ECSU

- Legislated role accountable to MDE and MN Olmsted Plan. There are 8 RLIFs assigned to cover the 11 regions of the state. Region 11 is the smallest in geographical area, but home to the largest number of students and staff.



Who is part of these CoPs?

Ingrid Aasan

- Primarily work is as liaisons between their region and MDE. They help implement state initiatives, collaborate on evidence based practices and support the work of State/wide Specialists at a regional level.



Who is part of these CoPs?

Ingrid Aasan

- Statewide Specialist or State Specialist
 - Provide leadership and build state-wide capacity to develop, implement and sustain current and emerging evidence-based practices that support positive outcomes for all students.



Who is part of these CoPs?

Ingrid Aasan

- With a specific focus on students within their respective disability area/s. State/wide Specialists also field all questions from the field; provide technical assistance; and interpret policy, MN Rule and MN Statute.
- They are included in communication regarding regional CoPs, but don't typically attend meetings, unless specifically invited to address a specific topic.



Who is part of these CoPs?

Kayna Plaisted

Professional Development Facilitator

Responsible for:

- Moving Region 11 CoPs from informal networks to formal Communities of Practice
- Liaison between region 11 CoPs, Statewide CoPs, other region CoPs and MDE initiatives
- Primary role is to work with Co-Facilitators to provide CoPs with structured and engaging meetings around their domains of practice



Who is part of these CoPs?

Content “Co”-Facilitators, (also known as co-coaches, co-chairs etc.)

Voluntary paid position held by a district member within the CoP

- Responsible for helping with agenda, facilitating meetings, taking notes, creating goal plan, participate in meetings and sharing our work with other regions



Who is part of these CoPs?

Members, two representatives per district within region 11

- Need District Director of Special Education approval
- Responsible for representing the district, taking notes, sharing information learned in CoPs with district and participating in goals



Who is part of these CoPs?

MDE Perspective

The CoPs provide:

- an opportunity to gather highly qualified, director recommended district professionals.
- the opportunity for alike career professionals to learn, create and share together and share our same career, successes and problems.
- opportunity for enhanced practices to reach everyone in the field and each student within our state which ultimately improves student outcomes.



Why Community of Practice?

Knowledge markets are globalizing rapidly.

- What someone knows in Turkey could make or break your business in London.
- What a competitor's team is learning in South America could be the undoing of your project in Massachusetts.
- Success in global markets depends on communities sharing knowledge across the globe.



Who has Communities of Practice?

Examples:



Mercedes-Benz



What is a Community of Practice?

Communities of Practice are **groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.**



What is a Community of Practice?

A community of practice is a unique combination of three fundamental elements:

- A domain of knowledge, which defines a set of issues
- A community of people who care about this domain
- The shared practice that they are developing to be effective in their domain.



Who is part of these CoPs

Domain

- Shared identity defined by interests
- Key issues or problems members commonly experience
- Well defined and specific yet long lasting (3+ years dedication)



Who is part of these CoPs?

Community

- Meets regularly (virtual or in person)
- Large or small groups (sub groups within large groups)
- Openness for communication in CoP and outside of CoP



Who is part of these CoPs?

Practice

- Balance between learning and production
- Documentation of learned best practices



What is a Community of Practice?

CoPs are simultaneously loose and tight

- Tight: nondiscretionary, nonnegotiable
- Loose: empowerment to make decisions

See information on next slide...



Types of Community of Practice

Characteristics of a TIGHT CoP

Domain: Key disability area of interest, defining common problems/issues, long lasting efforts on a topic

Community: Meets regularly, open communication in CoP meetings and out of them

Practice: Balance between learning and production, documentation of best practices to share outside of CoP



Types of Community of Practice

Characteristics of a LOOSE CoP

Domain: Establish your own interests, defining your own common problems related to your area of interest

Community: Options of large or small groups, choice in meeting times, communication as you are comfortable in large group

Practice: Your voice in what will be learned, your choice in what will be produced and how to share these best practices

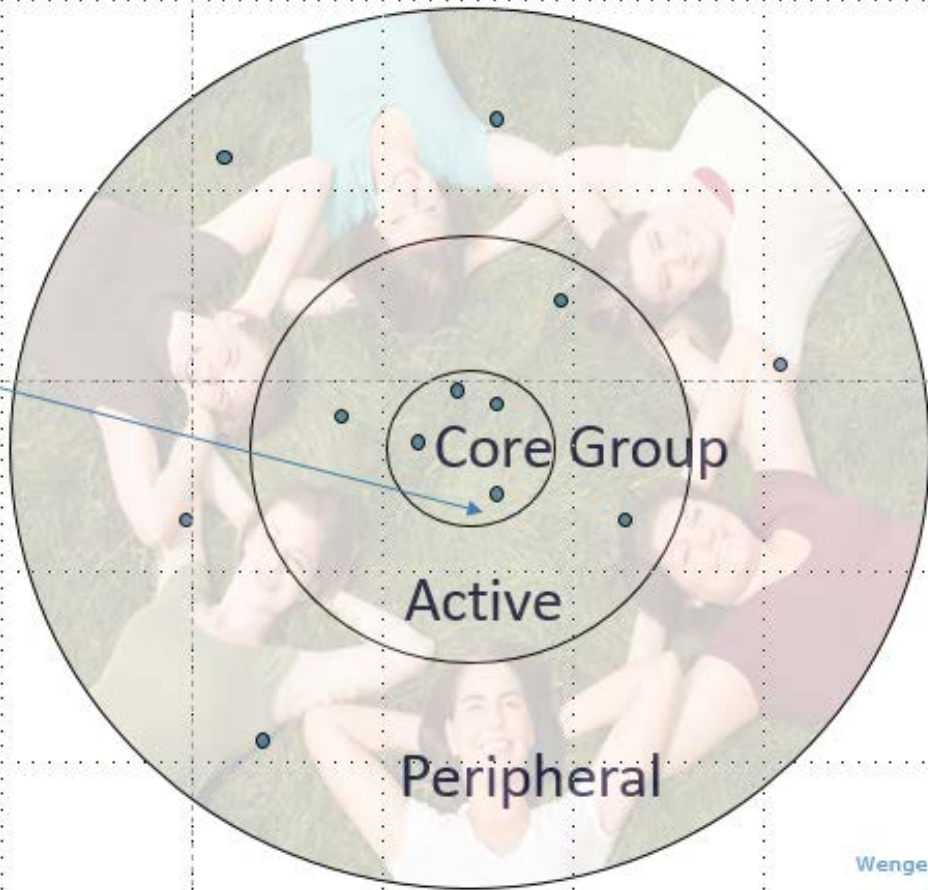
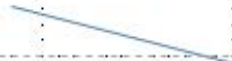


Degrees of Participation in a CoP

Outsider



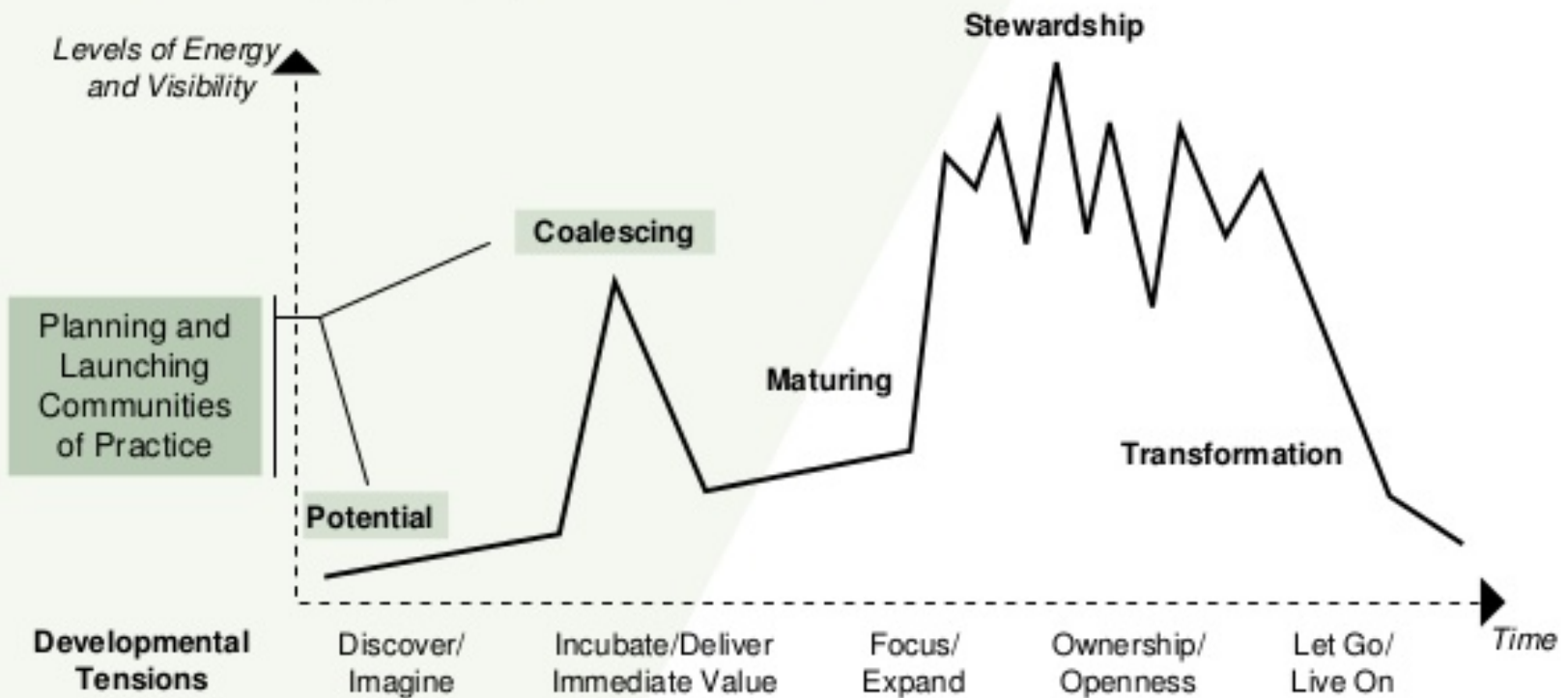
Coordinator



Wenger et al (2002)

What are the stages of CoPs?

The jagged line represents the level of energy and visibility that the community typically generates over time.



What are the goals of CoPs?

Each stage of development has different related goals



Stage 1 Potential

- Domain: Defining the scope of the common issues
- Community: Finding people who already network on the topic
- Practice: Identifying common knowledge needs



What are the goals of CoPs?

Each stage of development has different related goals



Stage 2 Coalescing

- Domain: Establish the value of sharing knowledge about domain
- Community: Develop trusting relationships for communication
- Practice: Discover the specific knowledge needing to be shared



What are the goals of CoPs?

Each stage of development has different related goals



Stage 3 Maturing

- Domain: Defining the role in the organization & relationship to other domains
- Community: Managing the boundary between collegial and congenial conversations
- Practice: Shift from learning into organizing the communities knowledge



What are the goals of CoPs?

Each stage of development has different related goals



Stage 4: Stewardship

- Domain: Maintain relevance of the domain, find a voice in the organization
- Community: Keep the meetings lively and engaging with intellectual focus
- Practice: Keep the community on the cutting edge of research



How to Measure Value in a CoP?

You cannot merely count things such as documents created or trainings completed



- These static measures only become useful in context of stories that explain the causal relationship between the work done within the CoP and the effect of the application of the work with students.
- The best way to assess the value of a community is to collect stories with the artifacts



What do we do from here?

Define our Domain (Rider)

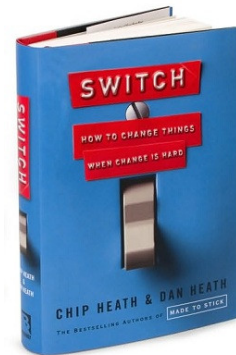
Everyone in the room should be able to clearly state what our domain is and how we are addressing it

Build our Community (Elephant)

Create relationships that allow for trust and communication

Shape our Practice (Path)

Outline how we will share and document our practice



Resources

List of Resources:

- Wenger, E., McDermott, R. A., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., Many, T. W., & Mattos, M. (2016). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.





Thank you!

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