What Comes After Professional Development: Online Communities of Practice

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Today's QR Code:

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"A community of practice is not just a Web site, a database, or a collection of best practices. It is a group of people who interact, learn together, build relationships, and in the process develop a sense of belonging and mutual commitment. Having others who share your overall view of the domain and yet bring their individual perspectives on any given problem creates a social learning system that goes beyond the sum of its parts"
- Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002, p. 34

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Purpose: This session is meant to outline how Online Communities of Practice can be a key driver of change within a school or district, engaging teachers and leaders in personalizing their own professional learning.

Non-Purpose: This session will not dig deeply into all of the benefits of Online Communities, or provide a step-by-step instruction on setting up communities for your school or district, but rather focus on some that are most beneficial to teachers and leaders as a part of a professional learning strategy.

Specific Goals of this session:
- Understand and Define the three elements of Online Communities of Practice through research
- Identify good practice within Online Communities of Practice
- Join the Blend-Tastic Bombastic Personalized PD Community

Specific Roles of this session:
- *Facilitator*: Ask questions, propose ideas
- *Participants*: Active Teachers and Learners

Working Agreements:
- Use all of the tools at your disposal to learn according to your needs & help those around you.
- When you have the thing you need, check out. Check back in when you're ready.
- Ask questions & share ideas. Tweet / blog / discuss!

Background:
- This work has been ongoing with a group of Online Community Practice Managers within DPS, and we have been meeting since October of 2013 to lay out how these communities will support our work. You can go through our notes here:
  - First Session Notes Document: http://goo.gl/JblJ1n
  - Second Session Notes Document: http://goo.gl/IevbqX
  - Third Session Notes Document: http://goo.gl/w9v6Sd
  - Fourth Session Notes Document: http://goo.gl/mgknZY
  - Fifth Session Notes Document: http://goo.gl/33GB0s
  - Sixth Session Notes Document: http://bit.ly/dpscop6
  - Seventh Session Notes Document: http://bit.ly/dpscops7
  - Eighth Session Notes Document: http://bit.ly/dpscop8
- You can find the Online Community of Practice Manager community here:
  - http://bit.ly/dpspractice
- Research for this session can be found in this meta-analysis:
  - Literature Review and Synthesis: Online Communities of Practice

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Process/Agenda:

Essential Questions:

With your table group or partner:

- What makes a group a **community**?
  - ○
  - ○
  - ○

- What makes it a community of **practice**?
  - ○
  - ○
  - ○

Together:

- Why make it an **Online** community of practice?
  - ○
  - ○
  - ○

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Assumptions for learning in Communities of Practice:
- ○ Learning is fundamentally a social phenomenon.
- ○ Knowledge is integrated in the life of communities that share values, beliefs, languages, and ways of doing things.
- ○ The process of learning and the process of membership in a CoP are inseparable.
- ○ Knowledge is inseparable from practice.
- ○ Empowerment – the ability to contribute to a community – creates the potential for learning. Equitable contribution depends on all voices are being heard.
- ○ Professional Learning is a right. (Is high-quality professional learning a privilege?)

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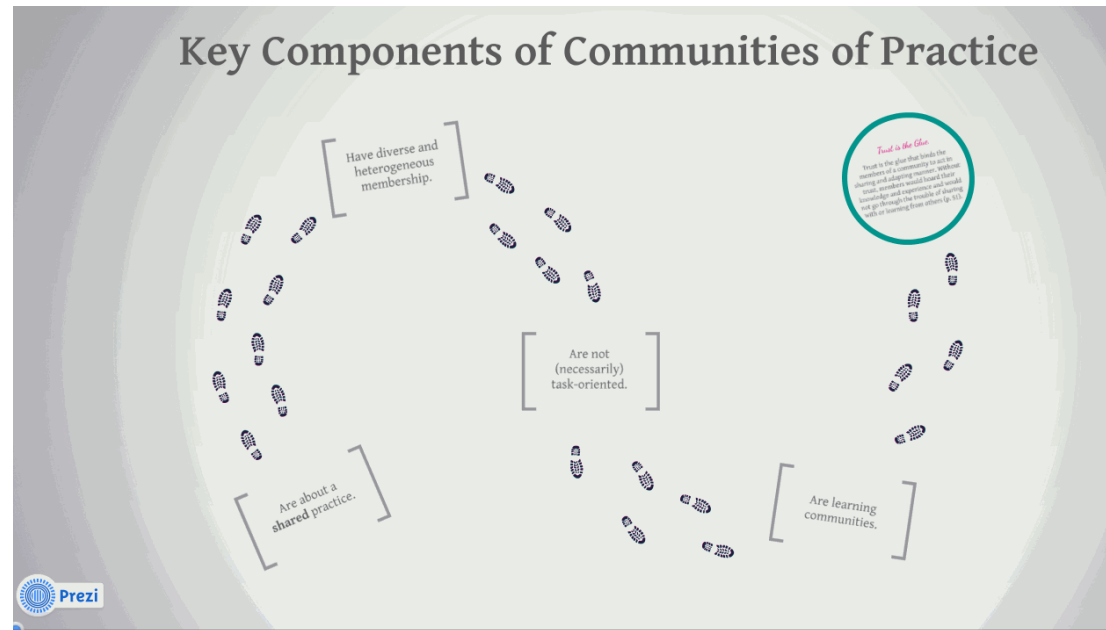
Key Components:

Communities of practice can be distinguished from other groupings in a number of ways. Communities of Practice:
- ○ Are about a shared practice;
- ○ Have diverse and heterogeneous membership;
- ○ Are not (necessarily) task-oriented; and
- ○ Are learning communities.
- Communities of practice are not just celebrations of common interests. They focus on practical aspects of a practice, everyday problems, new tools, developments in the field, things that work and don't (McDermott, 2001, p. 2).
- Trust is the glue that binds the members of a community to act in sharing and adapting manner. Without trust, members would hoard their knowledge and experience and would not go through the trouble of sharing with or learning from others (p. 51).

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Where do you find the key components in these examples of Online Communities of Practice?

How do these examples represent the core components of a Community of Practice? You may comment directly on those posts, or use this doc call out the great things you see happening in these examples for us all to see together.
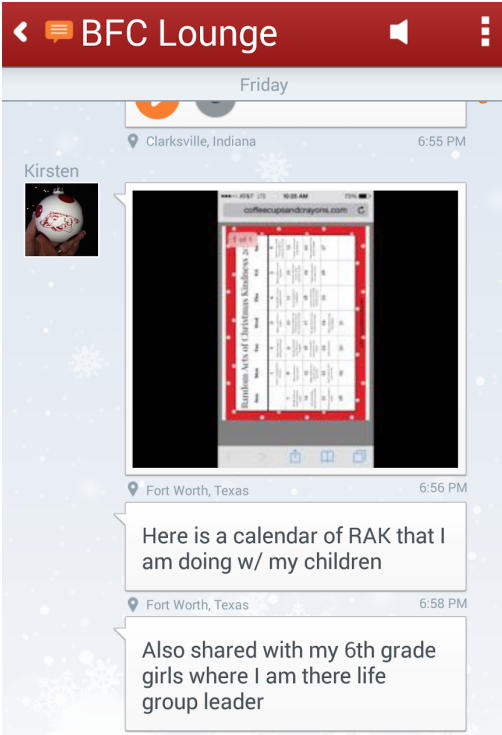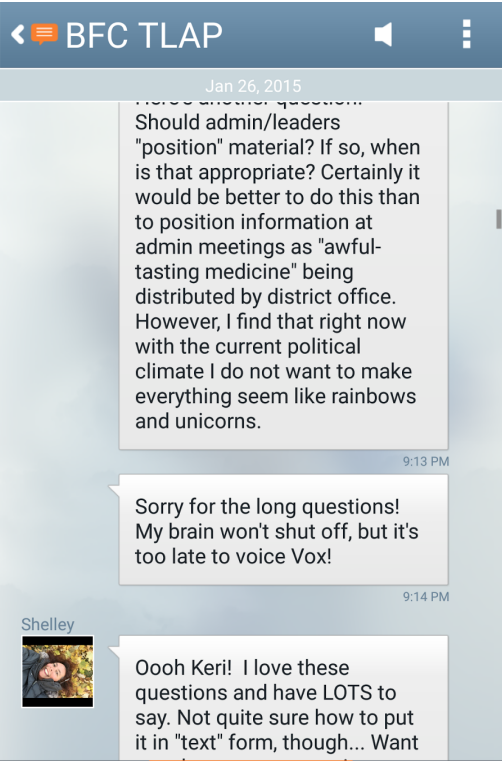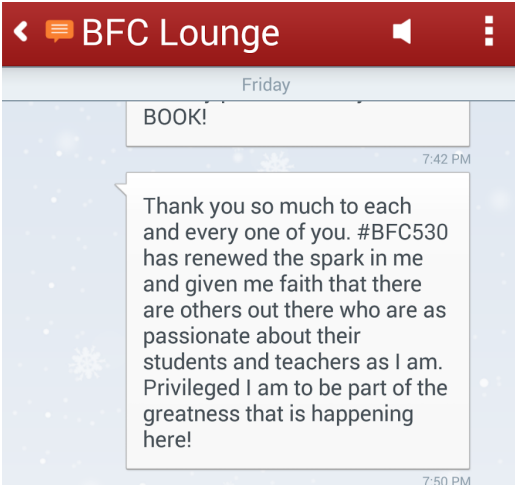
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Twitter: [#BFC530](#) / [BFC530.com](#) Storify archives from [EST](#) / [MST](#) [Recent Chat Topics](#)
(Every weekday; diverse group of educators; topics submitted & moderated by participants)

- 1/30/15 ["Characteristics of Strong Online Communities"](#)

  -

- 11/18/14 ["Leadership Characteristics"](#)

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- 11/10/14 "[Advice/Examples for Requesting School WiFi Access"](#)

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Voxer:

BFC Lounge
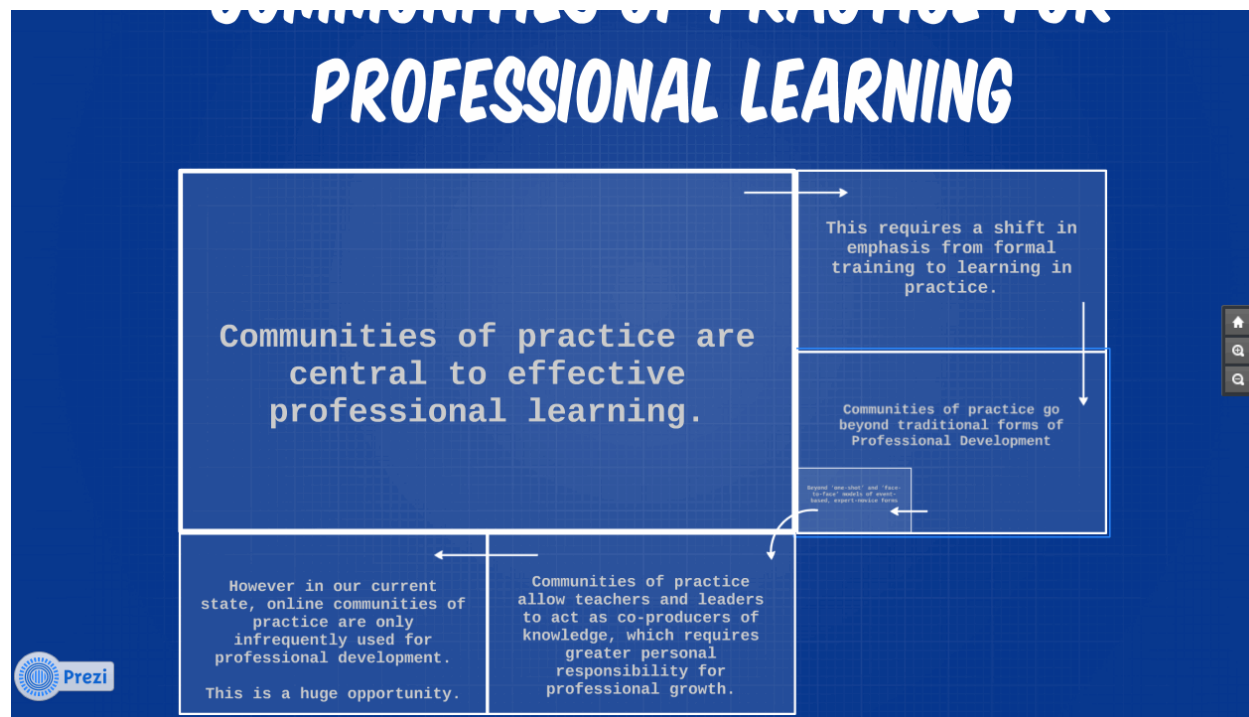
Friday

📍 Clarksville, Indiana   6:55 PM

Kirsten

📍 Fort Worth, Texas   6:56 PM

Here is a calendar of RAK that I am doing w/ my children

📍 Fort Worth, Texas   6:58 PM

Also shared with my 6th grade girls where I am there life group leader

BFC TLAP

Jan 26, 2015

Here's another question... Should admin/leaders "position" material? If so, when is that appropriate? Certainly it would be better to do this than to position information at admin meetings as "awful-tasting medicine" being distributed by district office. However, I find that right now with the current political climate I do not want to make everything seem like rainbows and unicorns.

9:13 PM

Sorry for the long questions! My brain won't shut off, but it's too late to voice Vox!

9:14 PM

Shelley

Oooh Keri! I love these questions and have LOTS to say. Not quite sure how to put it in "text" form, though... Want

BFC Lounge

Friday

BOOK!

7:42 PM

Thank you so much to each and every one of you. #BFC530 has renewed the spark in me and given me faith that there are others out there who are as passionate about their students and teachers as I am. Privileged I am to be part of the greatness that is happening here!

7:50 PM

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Communities of practice are central to effective professional learning.
- This requires a shift in emphasis from formal training to learning in practice.
- Communities of practice go beyond traditional forms of Professional Development ('one-shot' and 'face-to-face' models of event-based, expert-novice forms)
- Communities of practice allow teachers and leaders to act as co-producers of knowledge, which requires greater personal responsibility for professional growth.
- However in our current state, communities of practice are only infrequently used for professional development.

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How does this challenge you and your own PD (either PD you give or receive)?

- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○

Research on Effective Communities of Practice:

Insert comments on the examples of effective practice below to ask specific questions or provide feedback:
- What resonates with you?
- What doesn't make sense?
- What connections can you make to your work?

Effectiveness of CoPs	Examples
Learning in CoPs is situated and authentic – in CoPs professional learning takes place in an authentic situation. Real life examples of classroom practice are used to investigate and evaluate teaching practices.	The Learning Inquiry Forum (http://ilf.crlt.indiana.edu/) is designed to support in-service and pre-service mathematics and science teachers in the "sharing, improving, and creating inquiry-based, pedagogical practices" (Barab et al., 2004). A key feature in this online community is that teachers can observe, discuss, and reflect on pedagogical theory and practice by virtually visiting each other's classrooms through the use of Web-based video technology (Moore & Barab, 2002) (online CoP).
CoPs can facilitate teacher reflection – CoPs encourage members to involve in individual and collective reflection.	Perry, Walton and Calder's (1999) CoP for teachers to design and implement early literacy activities for young children reported a meeting structure which operationalises critical reflection (co- located CoP). Murphy and Laferriere (2003) conducted a study investigating how 64 teachers from around the world formed an online community to make sense of their practice in using the Internet to teach French as a second language. They found evidence that teachers "took advantage of their participation in the community to reflect on and share with others what working with the Internet meant for their practice" (p. 11). Findings in this study show that this online community provided teachers a means to "reflect on their experiences and share their interpretations of problems and situations in order to better understand them and make sense of them in relation to their practice" (p. 10) (online CoP).
CoPs help change instructional practice and strategies.	Riel and Becker's (2000) study found that involvement in collaborative work through a teacher's community had a direct impact on teaching. They found that those teachers who engaged more extensively with teachers in their schools and in the wider

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| | educational community were more likely to use constructivist and collaborative instructional strategies in their classes than those teachers who had little involvement in their communities or practice (co-located CoP).

Gallucci's (2003) study found that teachers in strong CoPs in primary schools changed their instructional practice in response to district reform policies (co-located CoP). |
|---|---|
| **CoPs can support change of beliefs and attitudes towards teaching – in a CoP teachers engage in collaborative tasks that give them opportunities to examine their values and beliefs about teaching.** | McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) found that different professional communities (innovative or traditional) accounted for the differences teachers conceived of their practice (co-located CoP).

In a three-year study investigating the effects of a Web-based CoP on 35 intern teachers, Hough, Smithey and Evertson (2004) found that the Web-based learning environment appears to "help teachers meet their needs for professional interaction and problem- solving, and...allow teachers to explore and further define their own assumptions and beliefs about successful teaching" (p. 383) (online CoP). |
| **CoPs facilitate knowledge creation and sharing best practice.** | Palincsar, Magnusson, Marano, Ford and Brown's (1998, cited in Buysse et al., 2003) Guided Inquiry supporting Multiple Literacies project for K-5 teachers to improve science teaching practice found that "the participatory process through which members moved from learning how to reflect on practices...to becoming a community in which every person contributed knowledge and was transformed through this participation" (p. 270) (co-located CoP).

Mitchell and Young's study (2002) of 16 CoPs found evidence of transfer of best practice and dissemination of information in these CoPs (co-located CoP).

Ramondt and Chapman (2004) documented that CoPs could effectively support the sharing of best practice for principals in the Talking Heads online community (online CoP). |
| **CoPs change the role of teachers to co-learners.** | Webb et al. (2004) found that in the CoPs of four Tasmanian primary schools focusing on the provision of professional learning to support the use of ICT in teaching and learning, the participants were learners but they also took roles as co-learners, tutors, or mentors. |

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	They were not only learners who "confirmed and validated the experiences of their fellow learners" but were also co-producers of knowledge, which required them to take greater responsibility of their own professional growth. They were involved in a much wider and more dynamic set of relationships than the traditional 'novice-expert' model. The roles that teachers had in the CoPs greatly assisted in embedding the new or improved practices into the life and work of the school (online CoP).
CoPs facilitate identity building.	In Gray's (2004) study of 43 coordinators of the Alberta Community Adult Learning Council, she found that an online CoP can provide a space for newcomers to become enculturated and learn elements of the practice, where "online participation not only served as a tool for informal learning situated in the context of coordinators' everyday work experience, but also that participation became important in defining identity of the practice itself" (p. 25) (online CoP).
CoPs reduce teacher isolation.	Ramondt and Chapman (2004)'s study showed that principals felt less isolated, and their membership in an online CoP enabled them to participate in national discussions on current headship and policy issues (online CoP).
Teachers are satisfied with this form of professional development.	Webb et al.'s study (2004) found that after using the CoP approach for professional development, the participants involved in the CoPs reported higher levels of satisfaction in what they have achieved and schools reported a higher level of commitment in using this model for future professional development (online CoP).

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[(If you have never used Google+ before, please use this handy how-to for doing so.)](#)
### OR
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Ask a key question or post a resource in accordance with effective uses of an Online Community of Practice:

- Use a Real life example of classroom practice to investigate and evaluate teaching practices.
- Encourage members to engage in individual and collective reflection.
- Help change instructional practice and strategies.
- Engage in collaborative tasks that give you opportunities to examine your values and beliefs about teaching.
- Facilitate knowledge creation and sharing best practice.
- Change the role of teachers to co-learners.
- Facilitate identity building.
- Reduce teacher isolation.

For Example:
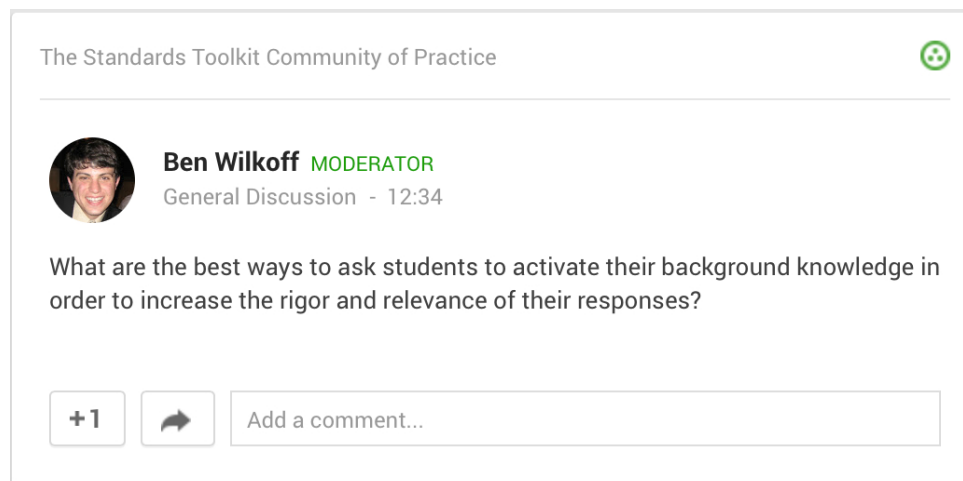
Session Evaluation

Your feedback is immensely valuable in continuing to grow as a facilitator. Please take a few moments to fill out:

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Resources

Online Communities of Practice Toolkit:
http://learningremodeled.com/portfolio-item/project-join/

How To Create and Use a Community in Google+:
http://bit.ly/communityhowto

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