

Sustaining Programs through Communities of Practice

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THINKING LIKE A PARTNER: The Strategic Value of Communities of Practice in Achieving and Sustaining Goals



- Everyone has something to share and everyone has something to learn about our most challenging issues.
- States and stakeholders are turning varied perspectives into strategies to change the way we approach complex problems

The IDEA Partnership: Pioneering a New Role in Fostering Change

- **55 National Organizations**
- **Federal TA Centers**
- **25 States**
 - **Leading by convening**
 - Translate complex challenges into ways that individuals can contribute
 - **Coalescing around issues**
 - What will bring people together?
 - **Doing work together**
 - Focus on the work *and* the relationships
 - Recognize individual pursuits and shared goals
 - **Ensuring relevant participation**
 - Who must be involved to ensure changes in practice?

IDEA Partnership Communities of Practice

- Based upon the work of Etienne Wenger
<http://www.ewenger.com/theory/index.htm>
- *Communities of Practice (CoP)* are groups of people who interact regularly to solve a persistent problem or improve practice in an area that is important to them.

State Teams in the National Community of Practice on School Behavioral Health Addressing Non-Academic Barriers to Achievement

- Hawaii
- Illinois
- Maryland
- Minnesota
- Missouri
- Montana
- New Hampshire
- New Mexico
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- South Carolina
- South Dakota
- Utah
- West Virginia
- Vermont

State Teams in the National Community of Practice on Transition

Improving Post-Secondary Outcomes: Education, Employment, Independent Living - through Transition Planning

- Arizona
- California
- District of Columbia
- Delaware
- Minnesota
- North Dakota
- New Hampshire
- New York
- Pennsylvania
- South Dakota
- Virginia
- Wisconsin

What are Communities of Practice?



A way of working

- Involving those who do shared work
- Involving those who share issues
- Always asking “who isn’t here?”

A way of learning

- To create new knowledge grounded in ‘doing the work’
- With those who can advocate for and make change

Knowledge Management (KM): The New Focus on Information *and* Experience



*“Knowledge is an
asset to be
managed like other
assets”*

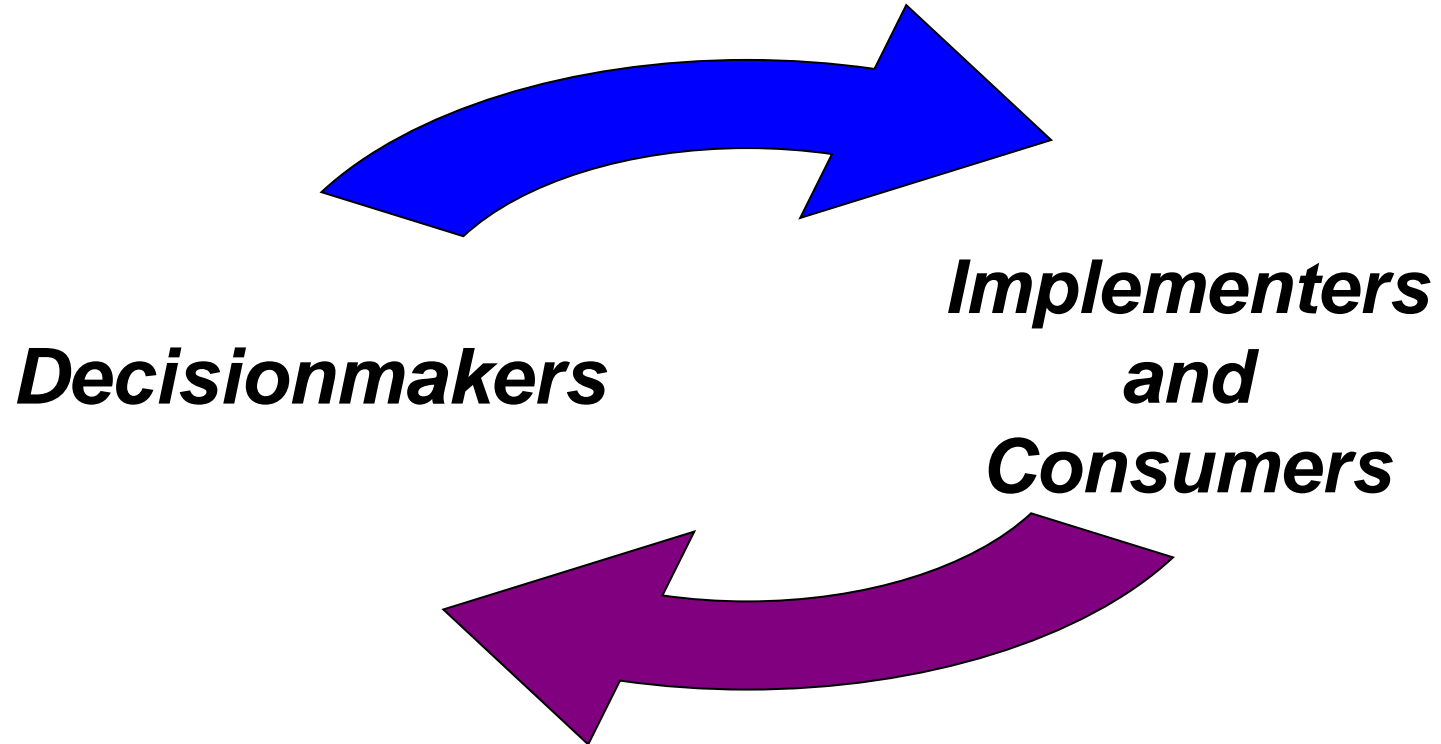
Etienne Wenger

Communities of Practice: The Evolution of Knowledge Management

- Untapped knowledge resides with those who are closest to the work
- To reveal opportunities and gaps, leaders need to engage those who have a role in resolving persistent problems
- *Real* change requires that leaders and implementers build a shared sense of purpose around the change



***Two-Way Learning:
Partnering to Learn What Works***



What Do Communities of Practice Do?



- Seek and invite others doing shared work
- Share learnings within organizations, agencies and roles
- Share learnings across organizations, agencies and roles
- Decide to do things together that will address a shared concern
- Create new knowledge grounded in 'doing' the work

Why Are Communities of Value?

- Provide the support that individuals need
- Respect the *expertise* that individuals bring
- Recognize the differences in the settings where people do their work
- Seek commonality among differing viewpoints
- Unite individuals in action
- Focus on learning
- Use learning to transform practice



How Do Communities Make a Difference?



- Use the natural bonds between people who do common work
- Maintain communication that strengthen natural bonds
- Keep community members focused on outcomes
- Use the *community status* to bring attention to issues
- Use the *community status* to engage the people who can help move the issues
- Move change to the '*Tipping Point*'

CoPs: Advancing SEA Priorities by Engaging Stakeholders

- **Hawaii**

- In response to Felix Consent Decree, CoP began as a way to build relationships and improve services
- Has grown into a systemic approach to improvement
- Based on HI CoP experience, US Army has adopted a CoP approach to supporting the mental health needs of military families

CoPs: Advancing Agency Priorities by Engaging Stakeholders

- **Pennsylvania**

- Multi-agency CoP implemented School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports in 121 schools without a dedicated funding stream
- Working to develop staff capacity for providing person-centered planning model as tertiary-level support for students at-risk for poor post-school outcomes.

CoPs: Advancing SEA Priorities by Engaging Stakeholders

- **New Hampshire**

- CoPs on Transition and Children's Mental Health connect the dots between initiatives
- Sustaining and leveraging work begun on several federal and state grants
- NH Children's Mental Health CoP engaged in developing state strategic plan

- **Wisconsin**

- Connecting HTI initiative to Transition CoP

National Practice Groups

- Child Welfare and School Mental Health
- Connecting School Mental Health and Positive Behavior Supports
- Connecting School Mental Health with Juvenile Justice and Dropout Prevention
- Education: An Essential Component of Systems of Care
- Family-School-Community Partnerships
- Improving School Mental Health for Youth with Disabilities
- Learning the Language/Promoting Effective Collaboration
- Psychiatry in Schools
- Quality and Evidence-Based Practice
- School Mental Health for Military Families
- Building a Collaborative Culture for Student Mental Health
- Youth Involvement and Leadership
- School Mental Health for Culturally Diverse Youth

Value Added Through Working as Communities of Practice

- The National CoP models this way of working for agencies, states, organizations and federal technical assistance centers
- State CoPs model the values in their work with local programs and the array of stakeholders
- Technical assistance centers look beyond worksopes to find connections and develop relationships to support making connections
- Organizations bring the perspective of their constituents to a broad audience and bring multiple perspectives back to their members

IDEA Partnership: CoP in Practice

- www.ideapartnership.org
- **Communities of Practice: A New Approach to Solving Complex Educational Problems**
 - Cashman, J., Linehan, P., & Rosser, M. (2007) Communities of Practice: A new approach to solving complex educational problems. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
<http://www.ideapartnership.org/documents/CoPGuide.pdf>
- www.sharedwork.org
 - National Communities
 - State Communities
 - Resources, Documents, Wikis, Blogs