Best practices and innovative ideas can be shared and cultivated in a collaborative and engaging professional network called a Community of Practice (CoP).

Participating in a CoP can help educators gain a positive outlook towards professional development through increased autonomy—choosing learning topics as well as how and when to learn.

In this webinar, we will:
- define a CoP and its components
- examine practical steps for building a sustainable CoP
- discuss CoP participation benefits
- share the successes of an ongoing CoP
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Recently, she served two years in Laos as a U.S. Department of State English Language Fellow, working on the Lower Mekong Initiative’s Professional Communication Skills for Leaders project and other regional professional education projects.

Mari received her Master of Education degree with an emphasis in Adult and Higher Education from Western Washington University.

Having lived and worked in international settings, she strongly believes in the power of the global community.
Webinar Overview

- Define a Community of Practice (CoP) and identify its key characteristics
- Discuss the steps to developing a sustainable CoP
- Examine the benefits of a CoP
- Share experiences, successes, and challenges of a regional CoP
Community of Practice

A community of practice (CoP) is “a persistent, sustained, social network of individuals who share and develop an overlapping knowledge base, set of beliefs, values, history, and experiences focused on a common practice or mutual enterprise.”

(Barab et al. 2001)
Community of Practice

A CoP is a **sustainable group** of teachers who develop a **shared knowledge base** focused on a **common goal**.
Essential Elements of a CoP

- Mutual Engagement
- Joint Enterprise
- A Shared Repertoire

(Tavakoli 2015)
Essential Elements of a CoP

- Mutual Engagement
- Joint Enterprise
- A Shared Repertoire
- Sustainable group
- Common goal
- Shared knowledge

(Tavakoli 2015)
Essential Elements of a CoP: The Basics

Sustainable group:
- *number of members varies by group*

Common goal:
- *determined by group*

Shared knowledge:
- *face-to-face or online*
Which is a CoP?

**Option A**

Teachers gather on breaks or other free times and talk about their problems of the day: students, schedule changes, additional work given.

**Option B**

Five new teachers get together every week to identify issues and share strategies to increase students’ classroom participation.
How to develop a CoP

1. Establish the group
2. Establish the purpose
3. Identify goals
4. Get organized
5. Learn to collaborate
1. Establish a core group

How?

From your school
From your town
From a conference
2. Establish the purpose of your CoP

Goals

Benefits

Why?
3. Identify goals

Establish key issues

Develop a timeline

Reflect on progress
3. Identify goals

Develop a timeline:

Meeting A: Brainstorming key issues

Meeting B: Select issue for focus: *increase student participation*

Meeting C: Members each research one strategy

Meeting D: Share strategies

Meeting E: Try one strategy in the classroom

Meeting F: Reflect on progress
4. Get organized

Logistics

Leadership

Expectations

Introductory CoP orientation

Who?

How?

Where?

How often?

What?
5. Learn to collaborate.
Review: How to develop a CoP

1. Establish the group
2. Establish the purpose
3. Identify goals
4. Get organized
5. Learn to collaborate
What are the benefits of a CoP?
Develop meaningful and professional relationships in a specific and personalized setting
Collaborate in a supportive environment
Share and discover best practices
Support sustainable changes
Develop leadership skills and build confidence
Gain a positive outlook toward professional development
What are the benefits of a CoP?

• Develop meaningful & professional relationships in a specific and personalized setting
• Collaborate in a supportive environment
• Share and discover best practices
• Support sustainable changes
• Develop leadership skills and build confidence
• Gain a positive outlook toward professional development
How could participating in a CoP help you?
Experiences from a successful CoP
Activities of CoP Participants

- Grant writing and mentorship
- Mentoring new teachers
- Co-teaching workshops and training events
- Action research
- Online discussions
- Conference participation or presentation
“I am finally enjoying teaching English because of the wonderful people I’ve met along the way . . . students and colleagues in rural areas.”

“Action research modules have rekindled my passion for research when I was busy teaching. The research I’m conducting is not too complicated either. It’s manageable.”
CoP members describing their experiences...
Online collaboration “allows me to connect with other as well as a chance to see other people’s ideas.”

“(Collaborating) online ... gave us unlimited opportunities to collaborate with other CoP members. Moreover ... every member can read one another’s feedback or responses. So, it’s easy to share ideas.”
Who would you like to work with in a CoP?
Webinar review

- **Defined** a Community of Practice (CoP) and identify its key characteristics
- **Discussed** the steps to developing a sustainable CoP
- **Examined** the benefits of a CoP
- **Shared** experiences, successes, and challenges of a regional CoP
References


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Thank you!

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Reflection Questions

1. Around which topics or goals would teachers in your local area form a Community of Practice?

2. Would you prefer to participate in a CoP that works mostly face to face, mostly online, or a combination of both? Why?

3. What challenges would you expect to face when forming a new CoP in your area? How might you overcome these challenges?

4. How might you share the practical findings and other benefits of participating in a CoP with teachers beyond the core group members?