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

• *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 workscopes 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](http://www.ideapartnership.org)
- Communities of Practice: A New Approach to Solving Complex Educational Problems

- [www.sharedwork.org](http://www.sharedwork.org)
  - National Communities
  - State Communities
  - Resources, Documents, Wikis, Blogs