

Community Wisdom

SPRING 2009



NAME THAT CoP CONTEST!

In our October survey, we asked participants to give us ideas for a CoP name that captures the essence of what we are as a CoP of CoPs. We received some suggestions – examples are “ROBoCoP”, “Sharing Our Practise” (ShOP), “Creating Connections CoP”, and “Community of Facilitators”. In the interests of giving everyone a chance at a great prize (a \$50 gift certificate to Chapters) we are extending our deadline. Please email Barb with your CoP name suggestion. This contest is open to everyone, including the CoP working group!
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Enhancing practice through communities: the evolution of the CoP facilitators initiative

In the spring of 2008, a group of individuals spanning practice, academia and various networks came together to explore ways of cultivating CoPs in the health, adult education and not for profit sectors in Alberta. We formed a working group with leadership from the Health Workforce Research Network of Alberta (HWRNA) and SEARCH Canada.

Our vision is to *build and support a community of professionals experienced in facilitating groups to enhance communication, interprofessional collaboration, collective learning, and discovery of new and innovative solutions to create a more productive workplace in the health and adult education sectors in Alberta.*



Learn at Lunch: a CoP Success

Imagine gathering your continuing competency points and learning about the latest research – all by eating lunch, socializing and listening to stories. That’s exactly what Gwen Roberts, Clinical leader and Occupational Therapist with Regional School Health has done for herself and her colleagues with Learn at Lunch.

The program started four years ago as a way for experienced staff to orient new staff, but

evolved into a forum to discuss school health issues and explore scope of practice. The members are mostly Occupational Therapists, but there are also Physiotherapists, Physiotherapy Assistants, and students.

Gwen’s role is the organizational facilitator. Two weeks before the monthly meeting, she canvasses the group for a topic to discuss. She also has someone arrange

I am trying to understand the connection between knowledge, community, learning, and identity. The basic idea is that human knowing is fundamentally a social act. This simple observation has profound implications for the way we think of and attempt to support learning.

-Etienne Wenger, <http://www.ewenger.com/>

October 2008 Summit

The CoP working group organized a start-up event targeting health and education practitioners experienced in facilitating and engaging groups to develop a shared understanding of creating and applying knowledge through CoPs and using CoPs as a vehicle to enhance practice. A one-day CoP Facilitation Summit was held in Calgary in October of 2008 with 40 participants.

The day was highly interactive and involved lots of lively discussion. We collected feedback from the participants and found our participants expressed interest in knowing more about evaluating their CoPs and educating others on the value of CoPs (i.e., selling the idea of CoPs to leadership as a way to build networks and as an economical way to encourage learning).

For participants interested in starting a CoP,

concerns centered around engaging individuals, accommodating a range of interests within a CoP while still being relevant to the purpose of the group, and defining domain, goals and plans. In terms of maintaining CoPs, the groups were interested in sustaining member engagement and ways to encourage effective learning conversations and ensuring the discourse is problem solving rather than griping.

The participants were most excited about the possibility of using professional networks to learn and to improve practice. The CoP working group also has plans to create an online resource centre with a toolkit for CoP facilitators, including general information on CoP related ideas and readings. This online resource centre is in the early planning stages and will be created in consultation with future users of this resource.



CoP Summit working group shares a post-summit laugh. Left to right: John Parboosingh (Consultant, Community Learning and Faculty, SEARCH Canada), Barb Colvin (Project Coordinator, SEARCH Canada), Zahra Nurani (Project Manager, Health Workforce Research Network of Alberta), Trish Paton (Community Development Coordinator, Alberta Health Services Medicine Hat), Christine Thompson (Program Manager, SEARCH Canada) Roberta Dubois (Manager, Respiratory Services, Alberta Health Services Red Deer) . Insert: Scott Oddie (Rural Health Research Chair, Faculty SEARCH Canada Red Deer College), who took the picture.

Learn at Lunch: a CoP Success Story! (continued from page 1)

for the food delivery and books the room. The meeting begins with lunch and social time, then from 1:30 to 2:30 the group tells stories from their practice and people discuss different ways of approaching the problems presented. An important part of this experience is feeling free to disagree and discuss – always in a respectful manner, of course. Because the stories involve real children and teachers, confidentiality must be respected. No names of people or schools are mentioned, and details may be changed to protect identity.

The last hour is spent on the topic Gwen has chosen based on suggestions from the CoP members. While Gwen facilitates the story portion of the meeting, the person who suggested the topic generally facilitates the topic portion of the session. During this time, research articles are also presented and discussed, bringing a knowledge translation element to the meeting.

Each session is evaluated with the participants answering open ended questions about what they learned, how they plan to put their new

knowledge into practice, what they thought was particularly good and how the session could be improved. They also rate the sessions from 1 to 10, with 10 being the best the session could be. The average ratings have always been at least 8 out of 10. Gwen puts this information on a shared drive, then returns the forms to their writers to keep in continuing competency files.

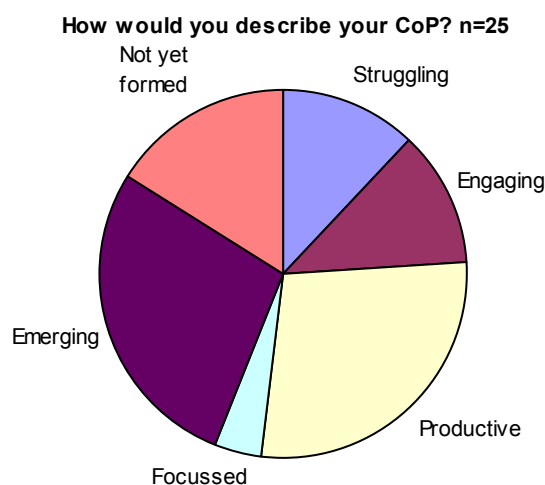
The attendance has grown from an average of 5 in the beginning to an average of eleven in the last year. The attendees feel 8 is a good number, however, as too large a group can actually impede discussion and trust. "While the participants like the discussions around topics and reviewing research, it's the stories that really grab them and keep them coming back," says Gwen.

The Learn at Lunch CoP has the full support of the manager, who allows four hours a month to attend CoPs. The lunch is paid for with CoP seed funding from SEARCH Canada. If you would like to contact Gwen for more details, email her at Gwen.Roberts@albertahealthservices.ca.

**Do you have a CoP story to tell?
We'd like to feature your CoP.
Contact: barb.colvin@searchca.net**

Post Summit CoP Facilitator's Survey Results

After the summit in October, the CoP working group wanted to get to know more about the summit participants, and what they would ideally like for CoP facilitation support. We created and deployed an online survey to the summit participants who had provided an email address, and had 34 responses. The following is a summary of what our respondents had to say.



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Survey Results, continued...

Are you currently facilitating a CoP? (34 respondents answered this question.)

Not yet	8
No but I take part in a CoP	6
I will be in the future	2
Yes, I have just started	6
Yes, I have been for some time	9
Other	3

What methods should we use to stay connected? Thirty respondents answered this question and could choose more than one answer.

Face to face meetings, email, telephone conferences, and discussion lists/newsgroups were the most popular choices; reports, group calendars and video connection had less support.

20 of 30 respondents said they would be willing to share their CoP facilitation success and challenges stories, and 8 said they would share "under certain conditions".

Survey open ended questions:

Of 34 survey respondents, 21 provided qualitative responses to three open-ended questions. Many thanks to Johana Stark and Veronika Kiryanova, psychology students working with Scott Oddie at Red Deer College, for doing this thematic analysis of the responses for us.

Please tell us about what, as a facilitator, you hope to get out of being involved in this facilitator CoP?

1. Developing facilitation skills

"The ability to lead a group and facilitate ongoing learning..." "Keep abreast of current practices in the area of facilitation..."

2. Engaging CoP members

"Encouraging the participation of all members of a group..." "ideas to engage CoP members in active knowledge exchange and production..."

3. Improved and enhanced outcomes

"Improve our practice as therapists..." "Have real progress on outcomes..."

What is the greatest strength(s) of your CoP?

1. Diversity of experience and expertise:

"A variety of backgrounds and skill sets in the participants..." "Experience and expertise crosses many boundaries..."

2. Motivation and Passion

"The greatest strength of our CoP is that we have members who are very passionate about what they do..." "The members are very keen to learn and improve their respective practices..."

3. Common values and goals

"Have a common knowledge base, goals and aspirations..." "Clear goals..."

What does your CoP need the most in order to sustain itself?

1. Organizational support

"Our CoP requires ongoing support of management ... allowing and encouraging staff to attend and participate..." "Some supporting organizational structure..."

2. Effective facilitation

"A person/organization to initiate and keep things moving along..." "Skilled facilitation..."



Our group supports those who are facilitating a CoP and who are experienced with the CoP platform. For more information or to become a member of the community please contact us at:

Health Workforce Research Network of Alberta (HWRNA)
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 403-943-0449