

# Wisconsin Personnel Development Grant - Early Childhood Hub

## Professional Development Topics

### Community of Practice (CoP)

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#### Knowledge Management Structures

The Early Childhood System is complex and encompasses many agencies, organizations, initiatives and systems. Therefore, a variety of structures are needed to link state, regional and local work. The following chart is designed to define terminology of common structures in professional development work. The rest of this document focuses on CoP.

	Purpose	Who Belongs	Cohesion	Length
<b>Community of Practice</b>	Build member capabilities; build & exchange knowledge	Those with common work scope	Passion, commitment and identification with group expertise	Ongoing as common work scope
<b>Professional Learning Community</b>	Educational settings; improve classroom practice & child outcomes	Collaborative teams usually in school-based settings	Achieve common goals that impact classroom practice	Ongoing based on member needs and outcomes
<b>Formal Work Group</b>	To deliver a product or service	Assigned or invited by convener	System sustainability or goal attainment	As needed for the initiative or service delivery
<b>Project Team</b>	To accomplish a specified task	Designated individuals based on task	Goals and progress	Until the project has been completed
<b>Informal Network</b>	To collect and pass on information	Individual interest in topic; Listserv	Mutual needs	As long as a need to connect

#### Definition: Community of Practice

**Shared Concern or Passion:** Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. Retrieved on 2/7/12 from:

<http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>

**Integration of Evidence-based Practices:** Communities of practice offer a promising approach for engaging stakeholder groups in collaboratively solving complex and, often, persistent problems in special education. Communities of Practice can help promote the spread of best practices and develop members' professional skills. Retrieved on 2/7/12 from: <http://www.ideapartnership.org/documents/CoPGuide.pdf>

#### Characteristics of Communities of Practice (CoP)

*Head, Heart, Hands* (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002)

**Domain (Head):** What is the major focus of the group? (Inspires purpose and value to members)

**Community (Heart):** Who are the stakeholders in this domain? (Interactions and relationships)

**Practice (Hands):** What is the specific knowledge the community develops, shares and maintains? (e.g., tools, frameworks, information, documents)

# Communities of Practice Indicator Checklist

A Tool to create shared understanding about Community of Practice Membership, Activities and Outcomes

Name of Group:				
Indicators	Essential	Desired	Optional	Comments
<b>Membership</b>				
• Requirements for membership				
• Common sense of purpose				
• Variety of stakeholders				
• Individual agencies support involvement				
• Shared competency				
• Dedicated leadership				
• Crosses service delivery areas				
<b>Activities</b>				
• Hold regular meetings				
• Build relationships				
• Share & exchange knowledge				
• Build cross system understanding				
• Involved in strategy or action plan				
• Coaching or mentoring offered				
• Use evidence-based practices				
<b>Outcomes</b>				
• Analyze real situations or problems				
• Development of common knowledge base				
• Provide specific professional development				
• Work towards fidelity of content delivery				
• Practical applications across systems				
• Shared reporting of activities				
• Improved outcomes for children with disabilities (Special Ed. Indicators B7 & C3)				
○ Positive Social Relationships				
○ Knowledge and Skills				
○ Action to meet needs				

*Checklist adapted from Communities of Practice Indicators Worksheet (2008). Pam Winton & Megan Ferris. National Professional Development Center on Inclusion, FPG Child Development Institute*