What is a Community of Practice?

A Community of Practice (CoP) is quite simply a group of people that agree to interact regularly to solve a persistent problem or improve practice in an area that is important to them. CoPs exist in many forms, some large in scale and dealing with complex problems, others small in scale and focused on a problem at a very specific level. CoPs are a way of working that invite the groups that have a stake in an issue to be a part of the problem-solving. The CoP develops its own schedule or ‘rhythm’ for interacting and creates mechanisms to communicate that give access to all the members. (Cashman, et al., 2007)

Selected Resources on Communities of Practice


Communities of Practice In Action: Selected Online CoPs of Interest to Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education Practitioners and Family Members

**Early Childhood Community.**
Sponsored by two projects at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute: The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) and CONNECT: The Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge. Includes announcements, online discussion, links to training modules.
http://community.fpg.unc.edu/

**Community of Practice on Early Childhood Family Support**
Supported by The Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas, this is an on-line gathering place that brings together families, professionals, researchers, and policy leaders to share our insights and experiences to bring about wisdom-based actions to enhance the quality of life of families who have children with disabilities.
http://www.beachcenter.org/families/family_support_in_early_childhood.aspx

**IDEA Partnership Communities of Practice**
Focused on advancing policy and practice for the implementation of IDEA and the alignment of IDEA with other federal legislation, the IDEA Partnership includes more than 50 national organizations, technical assistance providers, and organizations and agencies at the state and local level. Current CoP topics include NCLB-IDEA Collaboration Community, School Behavioral Health, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Creating Agreement, and Support of Secondary Transition. A Sharedwork website supports and facilitates work that occurs among individuals, organizations and agencies at the local, district, state, and national levels.
http://www.ideapartnership.org/

**OSEP Communities of Practice**
Supported by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network (TA&D), these communities are designed promote state improvement and performance related to the implementation of IDEA. TA Communities is the home for these communities of practice.
http://www.tacommunities.org/

**Early Childhood TA Consortium**
The consortium includes national projects that provide technical assistance in support of state efforts to build coordinated early learning and development systems. Purposes include coordinating early childhood TA systems, sharing knowledge and resources for improving delivery and impact of TA, identifying strategies for working collaboratively, and enhancing each other’s TA efforts by leveraging resources to benefit our respective constituencies. The group holds monthly meetings via conference calls and supports a number of ongoing workgroups.
http://www.ectaconsortium.org/default.html