Building a Culture of Assessment by Applying Communities of Practice

Dr. Sarah Wu
Associate Director of Assessment

Dr. Susan R. Perry
Assistant Provost
Assessment Context

- **Organizational structure**
  - Four-year public, R2
  - 8 Ohio campuses, 6 other U.S., 4 worldwide
  - 10 colleges
  - 282+ undergraduate programs
  - 50+ master’s with 100 specializations
  - 23 doctoral with 50 specializations
  - 92 accredited academic programs
  - Decentralized RCM model
  - Varied assessment staffing
Challenges

• Information sharing
• Professional development
• Myths and mindsets
• Maturity of assessment work
• Recognition and appreciation
What is Communities of Practice (CoP)?

- Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting (with each other) on an ongoing basis.

Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger (1991)
*Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.*
Learning Process - Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Periphery

Newcomers

Through:
- Engagement
- Interaction
- Collaboration
- Learning of knowledgeable skills

Old-timers

Mature practice

Full Participation

Social Practice

Boundary (flexible, dynamic)

Situated Learning

Cathay Keough (2016) Information Literacy Workshop
https://www.slideshare.net/CathayKeough/information-literacy-workshop-mccloskey-mladla-2016
From Assessment Challenges to Opportunity

Identify Challenges

Examine Missing Piece

Explore Support System
From Assessment Challenges to Opportunity

Identify Challenges
- HLC Report
- Survey (Information Distribution)
- ACAA meetings
- Literature Reviews

Examine Missing Piece
- A safe community
- Workshops
- Report Process Examination
- Recognition

Explore Support System
- Support from Senior Leadership
- Budget/ Resources
- Core Players
- Idea Promotion

Assessment Support Group
Summer, 2018

2015
2017
2017
-present
So, we start small

- Three persons
  - All staff
  - 1 male, 2 females
  - 2 Assessment Analysts + 1 Associate Director
  - 2 years - 5 years experience
  - All highly interested and engaged in assessment
  - Business & educational background
  - 1 person has CoP experience
About Kent State Assessment Support Group

• Mission Statement
  • The mission of the KSU Assessment Support Group is to encourage and promote a culture of assessment. We will develop assessment skills and strategies through discussions in the monthly meetings in which trust, respect, commitment, and equality enable us to work in partnership in order to synthesize the best practice in different areas.

• Goals
  1. Provide a respectful and open environment for members to share problems and exchange ideas about assessment in ways that builds trust and fosters equality
  2. Work toward solutions to issues identified as priorities within the assessment field
  3. Invite people from different levels of assessment engagement
  4. Develop, support, and share assessment best practices
  5. Promote collaboration across disciplines

https://www.dropbox.com/s/2e0r8tj6hqxbh3l/Assessment%20Support%20Group%20goals%20official.pdf?dl=0
About Kent State Assessment Support Group

- A safe place to share
- All levels of expertise are welcome
- Include all campuses
- Meet once a month
- Resources are shared on the website
- Learning from each others’ experiences
- Group members often revisit their goals
How does senior leadership support this group?

- Not attending the meetings (no kidding)
- Budget support
- Presentation
- Idea promotion
CoP Characteristics

• They are peer-to-peer collaborative networks
• They are driven by the willingness of the members
• They are focused on sharing knowledge, developing expertise and/or solving problems and lastly
• They are focused on learning and building capacity

Our Meetings Characteristics

• Job title is never mentioned
• Members come to a meeting because they are interested
• We talk about member highlights and strategies (example provided)
• We make sure people get what they want during or after the meeting (example provided)
Meeting Agenda (example)

Assessment Support Group Meeting
July 30, 2018 Meeting
SLIS Conference Room #65

AGENDA

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Community of practice
   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.

III. Assessment Highlight

IV. Assessment Challenge

V. Assessment Support Group
   Who- Open for people who are interested in assessment
   When- Once a month
   Where- TBD
   What- Assessment issues and strategies
   How- meeting

VI. Current Resources
   a. Assessment Google Site: https://sites.google.com/kent.edu/annual-assessment/home
   b. EHHS: https://www.kent.edu/ehhs/about-taskstream
   c. Business

VII. Next meeting

Meeting adjourned
6/16/2019

Personal Goals (example)

What would you like to get from this group??

- How to promote long term planning/leadership development community engagement via assessment
- Encourage buy-in from other admin units
- Take advantage of tools and unfamiliar with
- Assessment Day?
- How to use data outside internal use

What would you like to get from this group??

> Updates from the university level office
> Ideas/examples from other colleges/units
> Maybe topics that people in the group need more information on & guest speakers could come & provide that information
Current Status

- Group Members
- Group members’ knowledge, skills, & values
- Cross-disciplinary collaboration
Benefits and Value of a CoP

- Improve performance
- Identify, create, store, share and use knowledge
- Decrease learning curve
- Avoid reinvention of the wheel (and thus improve efficiency)
- Permit faster problem solving time
- Encourage and illuminate good practice
- Be a fertile ground for new and innovative ideas
- Accelerate learning
- Connect learning to action
- Support both personal and professional transformation
## Differences Between a CoP and a Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>CoP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Held together by a task or common goal</td>
<td>Held together by the learning value members find in their interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members may be assigned</td>
<td>Membership is voluntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ends when task is accomplished</td>
<td>Continues as long as it is valuable to members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership defined by task</td>
<td>Members have similar passions or concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under organizational control</td>
<td>Self organized or under the control of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common in higher education settings</td>
<td>Not as common in higher education settings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Group Activity

- **3-4 people per group**
  1. Introduce yourself by name only. *(No JOB TITLE)*
  2. What is the most recent assessment success you have had?
  3. What is the most recent assessment challenge you have encountered?
Group Activity

What did you learn?
Design Principles

1. **CoPs need to be designed for evolution** – the community must be able to evolve and shift in focus to meet the needs of the participants without steering too far from the domain of interest.

2. **CoPs need to be open to both the inside and outside perspectives** - an open dialogue is necessary to introduce and discuss new perspectives even if they are coming from outside the community of practice.

3. **CoPs need to accept and encourage varying levels of participation** - it is common to have different levels of participation in the community and acceptance of this can help in figuring out how best to engage the community members.

4. **CoPs are strengthened when participants operate within public and private community spaces** - encouraging individual or group activities that are shared publicly or privately (i.e. creating a blog to share activities or having small group meet-ups or video calls) can strengthen the community of practice.

5. **CoPs focus on value** - the thematic domain is the glue that binds the participants together and they are heightened by their shared practices.

6. **CoPs combine familiarity and excitement** - this is done through shared concerns and introducing challenging perspectives for discussion or action.

7. **CoPs create the rhythm for the community** - this is based on the regular activities and shared practices in the community which create the ‘cadence for the community.’ 

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002)
Reference


CoP Research and Practice Collaboration?
assessment@kent.edu
Thank You!

assessment@kent.edu