

Communities of Practice

Additional resources for Recruiting and Retaining Teachers

October 2010

Updated, May 2013

We didn't all come over on the same ship,
but we're all in the same boat.

—Barnard Baruch

Has the time come to consider the merits of forming or joining a community of practice? CoP, for short. These are proliferating to improve professional practice across the spectrum of professions—groups of people with a common concern who unite to discuss, decide, and pool what they know. Typically, these exchanges take place online. More often than not, any given CoP will also compile a library of resources that members can tap into and use in their own locale.



This page on CoPs looks specifically at CoPs that have formed to improve special education practice and services to children with disabilities. We've divided the discussion and resource lists into two primary parts, as described below. Pick your poison!

- [What's the buzz about CoPs?](#)
- [CoPs you can join](#)

What's the Buzz about CoPs?

Find materials that explain what CoPs in general are and what they hope to achieve, as well as materials you can use to develop, guide, or strengthen your own community.

Communities of practice: A brief introduction.

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

CoPs: Activities sponsored by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

This synthesis brief introduces the concept of CoPs, describes how CoPs are currently supported by OSEP at the state and national levels as a technical assistance (TA) strategy, and offers guidance to decisionmakers who are interested in forming their own state- or local-level CoP.

<http://tinyurl.com/2bvshvd>

The IDEA Partnership's page on CoPs.

<http://ideapartnership.org/creating-community.html>

Great resources on CoPs from the CDC.

CDC is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its CoP landing page branches off into separate resource pages, including an introduction to CoPs, how to launch and sustain a CoP, how to evaluate your CoP, a glossary,

references, and resources. Well worth visiting for the fundamentals!

<http://www.cdc.gov/phcommunities/>

[Back to top](#)

CoPs You Can Join

Perhaps you're looking for a community that's already working on a topic or challenge of great interest to you. Is there one out there on your topic? Here's a quick list of what's up-and-running.

Tacomunities: 10 and counting.

Tacomunities is the home for CoPs that are supported by the Technical Assistance and Dissemination (TA&D) Network and OSEP. Tacomunities provide resources and TA to states on issues that impact students with disabilities. There are currently 12 CoPs. The one's most relevant to teachers is probably the CoP on Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) – Part B, which focuses on strategies for improving access to and engagement in the general education curriculum and inclusionary practices, inside and outside of the classroom. Read all about these communities and join in the sharing at: www.tacomunities.org

The IDEA Partnership's CoPs.

These CoPs are focused on advancing policy and practice in four key areas:

- the intersections of NCLB and IDEA;
- school behavioral health services;
- interagency transition, and
- teacher quality (both general and special educators).

To that end, the Partnership has organized numerous CoPs that are worth delving into. Read all about what CoPs are available at:

<http://www.sharedwork.org/>

Early Childhood Community.

<http://community.fpg.unc.edu/>

Teacher-to-Teacher Forum of the National Association of Special Education Teachers.

<http://www.naset.org/teacherforum.0.html>

Beach Center on Disability's Family Support CoP.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Beach-Center-Family-Support-Community/63233819012?v=wall&viewas=0>

[Back to top](#)

Would you like to visit another resource page in the *Recruiting and Retaining Teachers* series?

- [Short-and-Sweet Summaries](#)
- [Guides and How To's](#)
- [What Does the Research Have to Say?](#)
- [Organizations to Know](#)
- [Mentoring New Teachers](#)
- [Communities of Practice \(you're already here\)](#)

[Back to top](#)