Developing a Community of Practice: Keeping Students Connected Beyond Graduation

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Building a Community of Practice:
Why is it important?

- "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." (Wenger, 2011)

- All University classes have the potential to be effective communities of practice (CoP)

- Benefits of CoP:
  - Support Collaboration
  - Increased ability to problem solve
  - Improved practice in the chosen profession
  - Creation of ongoing, mutually beneficial relationships
  - Autonomy
  - Self-efficacy
  - Resilience

(Delgado et al., 2021; Pogrund, 2019; Polizzi et al., 2021)

- However, CoP are *situated,* which means that their context will be highly influential on their effectiveness (Wenger, 1998)

Why is it important: Hearing from students

- "I really did feel a sense of community in this class...Vicki also made us feel extremely comfortable and the lessons enjoyable." (USS Surveys)

- "The community within this class has been great." (USS Surveys)

- "I have bragged to so many people about how tight knit our maths curriuclum class is, how I feel like I Have a mini family in uni" (Unsolicited communication during COVID online learning)

- "Thank you for building such a tight knit culture in our cohort" (Unsolicited communication during COVID online learning)

- "I always felt included in classes and supported by teachers" (USS Surveys)

- "They built a learning community with a strong sense of trust and camaraderie while also helping to fully prepare us on our journey to becoming secondary mathematics teachers" (USS Surveys)

Activity 1

- Think (4min) – Pair (3min) – Share (3min)

- Draw a mindmap considering the question:

Why are CoPs important in *your* setting?

- You might like to consider aspects related to student autonomy, resilience, self-efficacy.

Building a CoP

- The work starts in class….
  - Building classroom environments that promote relationships between students and the sharing of ideas
- But can grow beyond class…
  - Setting students up for successful collaboration prior to classes.
  - Connecting students outside of class
- And can grow beyond your unit…
  - Keeping students connected beyond the unit, and beyond graduation

Activity 2

Whole group structured brainstorm (5mins writing, 5mins discussing)

- Use this Padlet (QR code and link -> see right) to write about the activities/strategies that you use to promote a sense of community in *your* context?

https://sydney.padlet.org/benzunica/promoting_community_in_context

Our work in extending this to build a CoP

- Professional Innovations in Secondary Mathematics (PrISM)
  - Planned during 2022
  - Launched May 2023

- Quarterly meetings (1.5hrs)
  - Guest speaker on a topic of interest (30 minutes maximum)
  - Question time to guest speaker
  - Loosely-structured collaborative activity
  - Free collaboration/social time

Activity 3

- Think (4min) – Pair (3min) – Share (3min)

How might a CoP be launched in *your* setting

- Use the provided worksheet to help you think of ideas to get you started in building a CoP in your context
- Also use the worksheet to document one concrete activity that you might complete this semester to help in the development of a CoP

References

- Delgado, J., Siow, S., de Groot, J., McLane, B., & Hedlin, M. (2021). Towards collective moral resilience: the potential of communities of practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, *47*(6), 374-382.

- Pogrund, R. (2019). Beyond Training and Networking: The Benefits of Participating in Communities of Practice. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *113*(4).

- Polizzi, C., Lynn, S. J., & Perry, A. (2020). Stress and coping in the time of COVID-19: Pathways to resilience and recovery. *Clinical neuropsychiatry*, *17*(2).

- Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice: Learning as a social system. *Systems thinker*, *9*(5).