Converging Communities of Practice: Promoting Equity Through Iterative Collaboration

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AERA Annual Conference: April 21, 2015
Focus:

• Highlight the reciprocal learning that takes place when members of the research community work in tandem with practitioners in the field.

• Emphasize the perspective of a teacher, examining the trajectory of participation within and across a community of practice, and the subsequent ripple effect.
Framing the Problem

• Commitment of IES to fund partnerships and collaborations focused on problems of practice (IES 2014).

• Instructional shifts aligned with CCSS, as well as standardized assessments aligned to those standards (Gewertz, 2012; King, 2011).

• Demands of disciplinary learning for secondary students (Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2010; Goldman, 2012; Lee, 2014; Moje, 2008).
Positionality

Teacher: Urban Context
Doctoral Student
Commitments: Redefining deficit narratives
Theoretical Grounding: Key Constructs

- Communities of Practice (CoP)
- Disciplinary Learning
- Design-Based Research (DBR)
READI Literature Objectives

1. Close Reading of Text (Metacomprehension & Self-Regulation)
2. Interpretation of Message from Patterns of Language, Characters, Plot Structures
3. Establish Criteria for Interpretation of Patterns (Themes)
4. Generalize Interpretations (Structural and Author Generalizations)
5. Texts as open dialogues between reader and texts; Reveals aspects of human condition
6. Construct Claim/Evidence Relations; Knowledge Building of Key Concepts

PROJECT READI
Literature Design Team CoP

- Changes to Practice (Research and Teacher)
- Joint Enterprise
- Establishing Norms (Trust)
- Building Collective Knowledge & Artifacts
- Sharing Tacit Knowledge
- Shared Repertoire
Methods:

• Data Sources/Analysis:
  – Select audio recordings of Literature Design Team Meetings (beginning, middle and end of year meetings from 2011-2014), field notes, artifacts.
  – Classroom documentation: video tapes, field notes, READI designed modules, teacher reflections, student artifacts.
  – Constant comparative methodology (Glaser, 1978) to help identify recurring patterns/themes (Spradley, 1980).
Theme # 1:

- Literature Design Team meetings became an opportunity to confront and challenge traditional binaries associated with whom holds knowledge in the researcher-teacher dyad.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Support Structure</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Assessment</td>
<td>“possibly a theoretical question for me, but I’m not quite sure in your early practice when you talk about modeling...to what extent is modeling a...”</td>
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<td>Exclusion strategies</td>
<td>“We’ll have to see about that...”</td>
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<td>Sponsoring</td>
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<td>Opportunities for peripheral participation</td>
<td>“one of the reasons we have you guys at the table with us designing these [modules...”</td>
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<td>Inclusion strategies</td>
<td>“For those of you who don’t know what we’re talking about here...”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>“taking a very detailed look with you at your implementation of the Alchemist unit would really inform and be informative about our thinking for these kinds of scaffolds, the kinds of tasks, and the kinds of discourse that develop....to take a really close look at how your unit plays out with you”</td>
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<td>Participation Support Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>“there’s these rules of notice [Rabinowitz, 1987] that you brought to my attention...like you have to notice unusual things”</td>
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<td>Affirmation</td>
<td>“the annotations that your kids did Rick on those post-tests were really pretty extensive... I’d be curious to see what the nature of those are”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affirmation</td>
<td>“we’re working with this group of expert teachers...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation</td>
<td>“So what do you see as the central problem in the unit, in which The Alchemist is the anchoring text?”</td>
</tr>
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Theme # 2:

• The Classroom became a site of dynamic interaction that traversed boundaries of the CoP, allowing the appropriation of different lenses to understand problems of practice.
Crossing Borders, Blurring Boundaries

- Classroom as Community of Practice and a site of dynamic interaction
- Appropriation of lenses: macro/micro
- Debriefing Sessions: Share expertise through iterative cycles of interaction and reflection
- Modules as mediating tool for moving ahead student learning
- Research+Practice inform problems of practice
Theme # 3:

• Through my involvement with Literature Design Team CoP, I was able to cross boundaries, thereby linking related communities of practice.
Trajectory of Participation in Related Communities of Practice

- Literature Design Team CoP
- Chicago Teacher Network
- Network Level CoP (Middle & High School Teachers)
Bridging Communities of Practice

• Proof of Concept (POC) Teachers and Network Level CoP’s
• Sharing expertise gained as a member of the Literature Design Team and translating across contexts
• Work across CoP’s became a ‘window and mirror’ into my own professional growth
Reflections from the Network CoP

• “The informative resources were enlightening. They will be useful in implementing thought provoking lessons for my school community”. (Social Studies Teacher)

• “The opportunity to complete the the activity Slip or Trip was the most helpful today. It allowed me to experience the process as a learner and provided me with valuable resources to share with my staff.” (Assistant Principal)
Concluding Thoughts:

• Teaching is a ground game. Maintaining an aerial view from the ivory tower, dropping ‘relief packages’ in the form of research-based, innovative instructional strategies doesn’t address the complex ecological and structural realities (Gutierrez & Penuel, 2014) incurred by both teachers and students.

• Thinking deeply about the successes, challenges, constraints, and other forms of technical assistance required by teachers (and researchers alike) has been the work of this community of practice.

• The evolution of the community of practice became an opportunity, a site of steady, significant innovation (Brown and Duguid, 1991). And at the end of the day, that’s the nature of the game: steady work (Elmore & McLachlan, 1988) that ultimately manifests in changing outcomes for students.