

Using Communities of Practice to Support Professional Development Providers

What is a Community of Practice (CoP)?

Communities of Practice (CoP) 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.

Gillaspay, K., Vinh, M. E., Surbrook-Goins, N., & Nichols, S. (2019)



Over 30 Different Groups Across Illinois Have Participated in a CoP for PD Providers

Including, but not limited to:

- Illinois State Board of Education
- Child Care Resource & Referral
- Illinois STAR NET
- Head Start agencies
- Start Early,
- the Center for Early Childhood Professional Learning,
- and Early CHOICES

Communities of Practice:

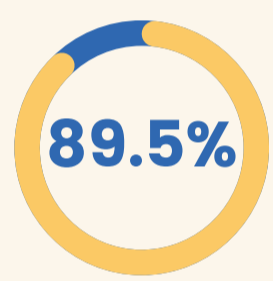
An Effective Strategy to Support Inclusion

In 2021 and 2022, Early CHOICES recruited two groups of professional development and technical assistance providers from across early care and education in Illinois to gather together for six virtual, 90-minute sessions to share knowledge and create strategies to support inclusion of all young children. Pre- and post-session data was collected to determine to what extent the CoP had achieved its purpose.

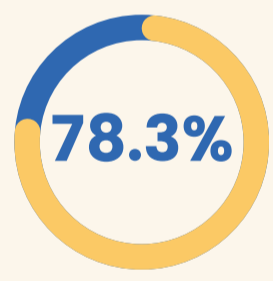
The Difference is REAL:

Communities of Practice provide ongoing and individualized support that actively engages practitioners even after formal sessions are over.

"Once and Done" Workshops/PD	VS	Communities of Practice
Learners are often inactive or listening for long periods of time		A successful CoP is dependent on the active participation of ALL its members
Information is often provided from one source.		Content and information is tailored to the individual needs of the group and provided by its members.
Learning often ends at end of session		Participants maintain access and connection to participants and resources to further extend learning and practice



of participants supported in their role and felt they could turn to CoP members for assistance

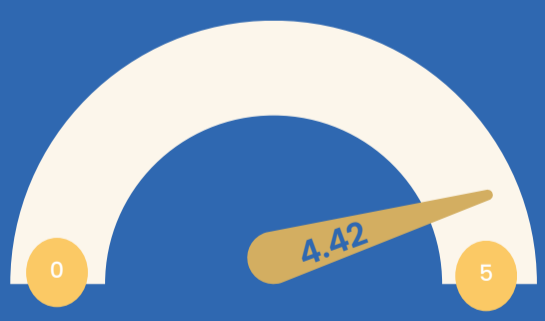


of participants had access to resources and information on inclusion they would not have easily obtained from another source

The most valuable part of the CoP was "having a model of what a COP looks like and how it can be used to reestablish commitment to inclusion, nurture shared beliefs and values, and as a way to share knowledge and strategies."

-2021 CoP for PD Provider Participant

Participants' Average Overall Rating of CoP Interaction Quality



Participants based their ratings on:

- Productivity of discussions among members
- Members getting answers to questions
- Sharing of experiences among members
- Sharing of resources/connections between members

Data from 2022/2023 Evaluation of CoP for PD Providers

Resources on Communities of Practice:

- Book: [Growing Together: Developing and Sustaining a Community of Practice in Early Childhood](#)
- [2021 Report on Community of Practice for Inclusion](#)
- Article: [6 key features of a successful community of practice](#)

Want to Know How YOU Can Participate in or Facilitate a CoP?

Contact Us!



www.eclre.org