

**Title of Session:** Technology's Role in Educator Learning Communities

**Moderator:** Michael Hosking

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Room: After School Online Room

**LeniD** joined the room.

**MarkS:** thanks Michael

**MichaelHo:** Unless someone else wants to.

**MichaelHo:** Anybody have a strong passion for moderating?

**MichaelH** waves to Leni

**MichaelHo:** ...:-)

**AnneMarieE:** Please take charge!!!

**MichaelHo:** Excellent.

**MichaelHo:** Will do.

**MarkS:** should we start with intros?

**AndrewMc:** I'll follow your lead

**MichaelHo:** I have two o'clock central time now...

**MichaelHo:** So, yes...

**MichaelHo:** we usually start with introductions.

**MichaelHo:** Let's go down the list to the left...would you mind starting Jay R?

**MichaelHo:** Tell us who you are and your interest in the topic.

**CherylHo** joined the room.

**MichaelHo:** Hello Cheryl.

**CherylHo:** Hello

**JayR:** I work for the Assessment and Accountability Office of the Kentucky Department of Education. We are developing a community of practice in which our teachers can develop test items and work on continuous assessment theory and practice.

**MichaelHo:** Excellent..sounds interesting.

**MichaelHo:** Michael H?

**MichaelH** is Michael Hutchison, a technology curriculum consultant at a school district in SW Indiana, and the host of the TAPPED IN Social Studies forum

**MarkS:** hi I'm Mark Schlager, director of Tapped In. right now I'm in a face to face conference on the same topic we are discussing here, so I will not be very vocal but I will be sharing what you say with the participants here

**MichaelHo:** AnneMarie? Hello Mark.

**KariH:** I'm Kari - a TI staff member - just here for support if needed.

**MichaelHo:** Thanks Kari.

**AnneMarieE:** I'm a third grade teacher in San Antonio, Tx. And just want to be able to use technology to enhance more of my lessons and learn what I can from this meeting.

**AndrewMc:** Andrew McIntosh, I'm an ed tech consultant working with 30 school districts in northern Wisconsin

**CherylHo:** I'm new to Tapped in and this is my first online conference

**Gap2Gst9** joined the room.

**CherylHo:** I teach in St Clair Shores in Michigan

**MarkS:** Welcome Cheryl!

**MichaelHo:** And Gap...would you care to introduce yourself?

**Gap2Gst9:** I'm from Modesto, CA and am struggling through an assignment to learn to use chatrooms

**LeniD:** Hello. I'm Leni Donlan, Coordinator of the eLearning Page Project at the Library of Congress. We are working on establishing a community of practice among our users.

**MichaelHo:** And finally, I'm Michael Hosking. I'm a former biology professor at Davidson College (NC). In 2000 I left to found PersonalProfessors.com, and online open learning community for math and science, the goal being to connect knowledge experts with learners over the Web in order to facilitate real instruction and interaction.

**MichaelHo:** Rather than 'text' content.

**MichaelHo:** So, Welcome all.

**MichaelHo:** A very nice group has assembled here today to discuss the role of technology in educator learning communities.

**MichaelHo:** Of course, Tapped In is a primary example of one such learning community.

**MichaelHo:** But..there is a great deal of discussion among educators about the meaning of 'community' and what technology-based community is.

**Gap2Gst9:** I'm a middle school math/science teacher. I received a grant last year to supply palm pilots to all of my students. We wanted to see if their test scores would go up with the "extra" use of technology.

**MichaelHo:** And, indeed, what the goals of such a community should be.

**MichaelHo:** Right, Gap. Many times that is the function of tech in the classroom..to increase performance.

**MichaelHo:** So, what should be the goal of an educator's community...thoughts?

**JayR:** I'd be interested in hearing the goals of Leni's group. It sounds interesting.

**MichaelH:** I suppose one aspect is that the community needs to be like-minded... people with similar interests...

**MichaelHo:** Yes..

**MichaelHo:** Leni..is your group-like minded? And if so, about what?

**LeniD:** We see it as a place where we can share resources and ideas about how to use them, with the educational users of the Library's web sites.

**MichaelHo:** And how do you share resources and information? In what form?

**LeniD:** We are like minded in that we attract educators, and are all interested in the use of primary source materials.

**LeniD:** I tend to use a shot-gun approach in my chats...bombarding the participants with resources...

**MichaelHo:** Ok..so you all meet via live chat.

**AndrewMc:** Is there much discussion of those resources in your chats?

**MichaelHo:** Is that the exclusive modality?

**LeniD:** though I post all the places we have visiting on our web site for a leisurely visit after we leave one another.

**MichaelH:** but Leni has so many great resources.... and most people get a transcript of all she shares after the session

**LeniD:** As much as I encourage, Andrew Some of the topics allow a great deal of thought and discussion and I do try to draw this out.

**JayR:** Is there a fairly stable core group?

**LeniD:** There is a small core...with vacillating attendance from month to month.

**CherylHo:** I am overwhelmed with the possibilities and resources that technology offers. I just don't know where to begin.

**MichaelHo:** That's a common problem...

**JayR:** We're a group and have a purpose...but we lack the permanence to be a community (among other things).

**MichaelHo:** Cheryl...

**MichaelHo:** what do you think would help you sort through the resources?

**MichaelHo:** Something like what Leni is describing?

**Gap2Gst9:** I use laptops, in addition to palm pilots. The kids catch on a lot quicker than I do, though...

**AnneMarieE:** Would it be a good idea to pool the community of educators to pin point a topic and search out the resources.

**MichaelHo:** Good thought AnneMarie....divide and conquer!

**MichaelH:** we sort of do that, Anne Marie... we have a social studies forum, language arts forum, science discussion group, etc.

**CherylHo:** I think that if I could narrow it down at first, that it would help. Our district just got computers this year and we are all trying to play catch up

**MichaelHo:** Just this year!!

**MichaelHo:** Wow.

**SusanR** joined the room.

**CherylHo:** Yes, we just got rid of our abacus too.

**MichaelHo:** I think that would be a primary goal of a tech-based educator group...use technology to identify good learning materials.

**MichaelHo:** Good one Cheryl!!

**AnneMarieE:** Playing catch up is so hard on the mind. Make a list of importance, and take it from there.

**LeniD:** Andrew hit a critical need...to sustain online communities, there has to be compelling reason to meet and participate.

**MichaelHo:** Leni..do you find that a larger group allows better identification of good resources? Right....

**AndrewMc:** I've found that true in the community I moderate, Leni

**MichaelHo:** and meeting goals of the group keeps everyone coming back.

**AndrewMc:** We have folks online, accounts paid for, but no real reason to BE online

**LeniD:** Michael, my chat is more of a "class"...I usually point to the resources...but the more attendees we have, the more others contribute.

**AndrewMc:** That need hasn't really been established by the project directors

**CherylHo:** I did start out the year by creating a page for students at schoolnotes.com. I created a different page for each unit of study. Next year we are going to have the Blackboard system and I am trying to learn that system.

**MichaelHo:** So..it seems like we are identifying two key points here.....correct me if I'm wrong...

**LeniD:** Need is critical

**MichaelHo:** Giving members of a group a reason to keep coming back

**MichaelHo:** and identifying what benefits there are to the community itself.

**MichaelH:** I think time is another critical factor...

**MichaelHo:** Building and sustaining community around a core need/function.

**LeniD:** Yes.

**MichaelH:** I get a lot of people who would like to attend sessions, but they "coach", have children, etc.

**MichaelHo:** Yes....

**AndrewMc:** That puts it nicely, Michael

**MichaelHo:** Thanks Andrew!

**JayR:** That goes back to needing the community

**AndrewMc:** Time depends on whether the community is synchronous or asynchronous

**MichaelHo:** Yes, most if not all educators don't have much free time...

**MichaelH:** used to bug me... the number of people who couldn't go to a session, but wanted me to send them a transcript

**MichaelHo:** Exactly where I'm going Andrew!!! Carry on with that thought...

**AndrewMc:** "My" community is entirely asynchronous

**MichaelHo:** (and a related point to be sure Michael H!)

**MichaelHo:** Could you explain that for everyone Andrew?

**AndrewMc:** which frees up everyone's time, to a certain extent

**JayR:** I prefer a mix of synchronous and async.

**AndrewMc:** It's a bulletin board system,

**MichaelHo:** Some may not recognize that term...asynchronous.

**AndrewMc:** people post when they can in threaded discussions

**MichaelHo:** Right. "Not at the same time".

**MichaelHo:** Whereas synchronous "at the same time" is....this!

**MichaelHo:** Or Web conferencing, or....is there anything else?

**MichaelHo:** IM?

**MichaelH:** there's plusses or minuses to both

**AndrewMc:** Synchronous (like now) has a tad more energy and urgency to the discussion

**MichaelH:** yes

**CherylHo:** I've been on mailing lists for other middle school teachers before, but they only last a few weeks. Everyone ends up too busy to post or respond. I would be interested in any active middle school teacher lists

**AndrewMc:** Asynchronous lets you reflect on what you read, and on what you say

**LeniD:** We tried asynchronous when we first began trying to build community...with very poor response. The fact that there was NOT a compelling need or a "show" in that milieu seemed to be an issue.

**LeniD:** That's true, Andrew, but it requires a more sustained effort than synchronous.

**LeniD:** It works well for a "course"...but not for a looser community, in my opinion.

**JayR:** Synchronous groups learn to pace themselves and their conversation.

**AnneMarieE:** I wonder if a change in topic and maybe sending out invitations to participate would help increase involvement.

**AndrewMc:** Yes, Leni. But my community of educators is designed to be a year-long project, which allows for sustained effort

**LeniD:** Excellent

**MichaelHo:** So....we seem to have identified at least one benefit of asynchronous online communities...

**MichaelHo:** people can attend when they have the time.

**MichaelHo:** But, the downside is...if there is not a compelling reason to attend...

**MichaelHo:** they will not. Rather a catch-22, eh?

**AndrewMc:** unless they are addicted to the interaction

**MichaelHo:** The very nature of the asynchronous may make folks less likely to attend!

**MichaelHo:** Which is a whole different discussion, eh Andrew?

**KariH:** I feel that asynchronous is beneficial when you need/want to be able to multitask because you can tend to it when you have a moment here and there. For synchronous I think it helps to have a set end time in advance so that folks know when they'll be done...just like in face-2-face meetings.

**MichaelHo:** But a real phenomenon I'm sure.

**AndrewMc:** Asynch doesn't have the pressure of a deadline, such as a scheduled chat time

**MichaelHo:** I agree with both of you, Andrew and Kari.

**JayR:** Many members produce better with deadlines...it gives urgency

**MichaelHo:** True...so that is a point in favor of live synchronous communication....is that what you are saying?

**JayR:** yup

**AndrewMc:** Good point, Jay. Creating deadlines in asynch can help participation

**AndrewMc:** much like a course with assignments

**MichaelHo:** Yes...putting a deadline in discussion boards can be easily done, can't it?

**LeniD:** If a "real" task is being done in asynchronous communities, deadlines actually exist.

**JayR** nods

**MichaelHo:** But....clearly, both asynchronous and synch. have their place. Good point Leni....I agree.

**JayR:** In a "real" situation, reality determines the synch/async mix

**MichaelHo:** Yes..both probably serve different functions....

**LeniD:** They have their place, and their strengths...and they also have fans. Some people find the speed of a live chat frightening.

**AndrewMc:** So to become effective, a community must have a "real" purpose?

**JayR:** Yes

**MichaelHo:** Could you talk about that a bit Jay?

**CherylHo:** Yes, you have to have a reason to compel you to attend.

**JayR:** or one they are willing to accept as real. Wargamers can get really excited about their "reality."

**AndrewMc:** I suppose it's similar to having authentic learning tasks for kids.

**LeniD:** Yes, I agree, Andrew.

**AndrewMc:** Why chat, or post, just to chat, or post.

**JayR:** Authenticity can be linked with passionate regard which is a key in communities of practice.

**MichaelHo:** And need can drive authenticity...for example the need for sorting through learning resources.

**AndrewMc:** Passionate regard creates an intrinsic need to participate?

**JayR:** If that's your need, it's real and can drive process and production.

**MichaelHo:** Which is, I believe, the foundation of communities of practice...shared needs.

**JayR** nods

**LeniD:** Yes.

**MichaelHo** smiles

**MichaelHo:** So...at the risk of circumventing more minute points, which are interesting...can we define educators as a community of practice?

**JayR:** At best. Many times they aren't really communities at all.

**LeniD:** Yes...with reservations.

**JayR:** I don't mean that as a cut. I taught for 30 years!

**MichaelHo:** Understood!!

**LeniD:** They have common, shared needs...but may not be motivated to explore them online (or offline)

**MichaelHo:** What drives the motivation then?

**MichaelHo:** Why are some motivated and some not?

**AndrewMc:** the 64 dollar question

**LeniD:** Yep!

**JayR:** Many teachers can't imagine what they are missing...not being in a community of practice with a passionate center.

**AnneMarieE:** However, there are really great grade levels who work as a community together toward a common goal. Who may be able to communicate with others in the district online?

**LeniD:** Those passionate about learning...those lifelong learners...get hooked with discussion about their practice.

**MichaelHo:** If there are shared needs, then presumably there would be a shared desire to meet those needs, solve those problems. That's the question that comes to mind, of course.

**AndrewMc:** Good point, Jay. If you haven't experienced a "good" learning community, you can't imagine what it's like

**AnneMarieE:** But it's still the effort of having to do this on your own time, that I can see posing a problem for some.

**JayR:** That's a real key experience.

**LeniD:** If teachers must solve a specific problem, or work toward a specific goal, they would be motivated to work together.

**LeniD:** Which takes me back to "real"

**MichaelHo:** So, teachers may all share certain needs/problems, but some may require more external motivation than others....

**AnneMarieE:** I agree.

**MichaelHo:** Some might need a 'real' problem, per Leni.

**AndrewMc:** naaah, that can't be true :-0

**MichaelHo:** Interesting....

**JayR:** Many people need more help jumping their technological hurdles so that participation in this sort of discussion is possible.

**JayR:** It's too scary and threatening for many.

**MichaelHo:** but once they got into a tech-based educator community, then the benefits would be obvious and no longer a need for external motivation?

**AnneMarieE:** It's amazing how many people still have a technology phobia, in this day and age.

**JayR:** Many...hopefully even most.

**MichaelHo:** (besides the tech fears)

**KariH:** In both synch and asynch communities you often have so-called "lurkers". Lurkers can benefit from the community by gaining knowledge/resources, etc. But if you want your lurkers to turn into contributing participants or even leaders in the community, then they must first feel that what they have to share is valued.

**MichaelHo** laughs

**MichaelHo:** Good point Kari.

**MichaelHo:** And true in almost any social situation, of which this is just one type..

**JayR:** I lurked in the original TI for weeks before I had the nerve to participate. But I had a need.

**LeniD:** Right on, Kari.

**KariH** nods to Michael Ho

**SusanR:** ie the K to 3+ Great Resources Group

**SusanR:** I lurked for the longest time.

**MichaelHo:** But did you benefit from your lurking?

**MichaelHo:** You must have, right?

**JayR:** I'm still here, seven or eight years later [8^]}

**MichaelHo:** So, you got some benefit....we don't want to discourage that do we?

**AnneMarieE:** These lurkers with the right amount of encouragement may turn into contributing members. And most lurkers pick up useful resources.

**CherylHo:** Lots of students don't raise their hands, yet they can benefit from the material discussed

**MichaelHo:** Exactly.

**AndrewMc:** But, you can gain even more by actively participating

**LeniD:** True...but students are "captive" audience in a classroom.

**AndrewMc:** Having to express your thoughts to others does tend to refine them a bit

**AnneMarieE:** actively participating is better than lurking, but at least the lurker is in the community.

**LeniD:** To get learners online requires either requirement, compelling mutual task/problem or the passion of lifelong learning.

**MichaelHo:** Hmmmmm.....so, voluntary participation around a shared set of needs with real benefits to those who take part, whether actively or 'lurkingly'! So far so good?

**SusanR:** or a common interest

**LeniD:** The lurker is definitely in the community...and is passively participating.

**JayR** lurks

**SusanR:** or goal

**MichaelHo:** (hilarious Jay...lol)

**LeniD:** Good one, Jay :-)))

**JayR:** I try to get our major decision makers in the department to at least lurk. I suspect that they are too nervous to even do that!

**Marks** wonders what you all would say to technology vendors if you could tell them what you really need from them to support your learning community

**JayR:** The higher up the tree you get, the more threatening the view down, I guess (he says from around the root structure).

**MichaelHo:** So Susan, or others...as a member of an active community that uses technology...what would you wish for if you could design an even better system

**MichaelHo:** Wow..what synchronicity Mark!!

**LeniD:** Amazing, gentlemen

**MarkS** grins

**AndrewMc:** Remote electroshock to the non-participants

**MichaelHo:** LOL

**KariH** grins at Andrew

**MichaelHo:** We now know your feelings about lurkers Andrew!!

**SusanR:** time and encouragement to use async and sync for professional development

**AndrewMc:** I'm a tremendous lurker in FtF

**LeniD:** I would ask for a "transparent" interface.

**MichaelHo:** But vendors can only provide a tool, not the motivation...

**MichaelHo:** you know Susan?

**JayR:** Better tools require less motivation.

**LeniD:** I would ask for a fluid environment, that is easy to navigate.

**MichaelHo:** Explain if you would please Leni....and good point Jay.

**SusanR:** show educators how it could benefit their teaching

**MichaelHo:** Demonstrate 'how' it can be used...ok.

**MichaelHo:** Gotcha Susan.

**AnneMarieE:** Maybe offer professional development credit for participating.

**KariH:** an easily accessed, thorough, but easy to read and understand, help guide to the community/interface.

**MichaelHo:** Schools and districts would have to do that, wouldn't they AnneMarie?

**LeniD:** Having to "go" a lot of places and find viable links is problematic for novice users of any technology...the architecture of the application is critical.

**SusanR** offer some type of creditation

**AnneMarieE:** Yes

**MichaelHo:** Thus far, Mark and conference participants....easy interfaces!!

**MarkS:** Gotcha

**AndrewMc:** check

**MichaelHo:** What's new, eh?

**MichaelHo:** But..perhaps one could ask vendors to think about the design from a participants standpoint.

**MichaelHo:** Maybe that's just saying the same thing, but often the system are designed by technologists who just love technology..sometimes for its own sake.

**LeniD:** Krug and Rosenfeld (?) just spoke at the Library...about web sites...the title of the book, "Don't Make Me Think" says it for me

**MichaelHo:** At least, that's been by experience with some systems. Just because you 'can' doesn't mean you 'should'.

**LeniD:** Exactly, Michael!

**SusanR** . o O ( Technology use increases teachers' sense of professionalism and achievement. )

**MichaelHo:** I call it the BMW iDrive fallacy....

**LeniD:** If the task is communication, the "challenge" of using an application should be minimized.

**MichaelHo:** Seamlessness seems to be a shared value/desire.

**AndrewMc:** Using the tool should be unconscious

**KariH** agrees with Leni

**JayR:** and not the user

**LeniD:** Yes...just so, Andrew...intuitive.

**AndrewMc:** much better word

**LeniD:** LOL, Jay

**AndrewMc:** And that can come with practice

**AndrewMc:** and a little training

**MichaelHo:** Interesting...these desires are almost universally applicable to those who work with technology, and common complaints by all...not just educators in a community of practice.

**AnneMarieE:** A lack of training always seems to come up.

**KariH:** but to be fair...the tool will become more second-nature with time...as it is with most things...so users/participants should be encouraged to explore the community and get to know it first

**MichaelHo:** Is there anything that is specifically applicable to educators who use technology? Any needs specific to that group?

**AndrewMc:** lack of training can be related to lack of time, and money

**MichaelHo:** The technology learning curve.

**KariH:** (hence, my suggestion for a solid help guide, tutorials, etc.)

**SusanR:** Creating Incentives for Technology Use will lessen reluctance of some to use the tools of technology

**MichaelHo:** Righto, Kari!

**LeniD:** Good points Kari and Susan.

**MichaelHo:** I think the ability to use it quickly and effectively, even during the school day would be a great benefit.

**MichaelHo:** Something that is 'instant on/ instant off'...

**MichaelHo:** Something that is good for 'just in time' learning.

**SusanR:** I think fear of change is often the real reason behind teachers' reluctance to use technology

**JayR:** Tech learning needs to be "just in time" much more than most--then with solid opportunities to practice.

**AnneMarieE:** The fear of change has been a crutch for too long now. We just need to jump into the cold water and warm up.

**SusanR:** Need more staff development

**MichaelHo:** Yes Susan...that is also true of everybody to some extent...except the first adopters (and we are all first adopters to some extent).

**AnneMarieE:** Staff development goes back to the districts not having enough money.

**JayR:** An online LMS with scads of tech/help lessons would be great

**MichaelHo:** Oh, what a tight web of constraints we have, eh?

**AndrewMc:** round and round and round we go

**LeniD:** But the need to attract teachers to a community of practice goes beyond fear of technology...and I come full circle. If you don't see a need for it, expertise or novice, you just won't do it.

**JayR:** and a community in which to share perspectives and concerns

**AndrewMc:** Exactly, Leni. Time is too valuable to waste on something you don't need

**MichaelHo:** Interesting.....so the best way to increase/encourage the use of online communities for educators is to actually prove the value of them!

**CherylHo:** Districts all over Michigan are being forced to cut literally millions of dollars from their budgets. It doesn't leave much for training

**LeniD:** How about that, Michael?

**MichaelHo:** Well....I see themes....training in the use of tech, the need to make strong cases for using it, shared needs/problems to solve, and time...!!

**MichaelHo:** Oh...and better interfaces!!

**MichaelHo:** It's about time to wrap up for today...

**AndrewMc:** Can you have that done by next week then?

**MichaelHo:** thanks all for taking part....

**MichaelHo:** Sure Andrew!!

**AndrewMc:** Thanks for facilitating

**MichaelHo:** This has been wonderful....

**LeniD:** Good job, Michael

**AnneMarieE:** This was a great meeting. Thanks

**JayR** cheers

**MichaelHo:** talk about passion and shared needs.....!

**AndrewMc:** Most interesting

**AnneMarieE:** waves good bye

**JayR** waves bye bye

**LeniD:** Bye, everyone. Thank you!

**MichaelHo:** Let's all talk again....we can, with this kind of passion and drive, really accomplish things..

**MichaelHo:** I just know we can.

**MichaelHo:** Take Care!

**MichaelHo:** Bye Mark and Conference Participants!