Connected Educator: Growing Your Professional Network

Educator shares and learns in the global community as a means to develop professionally.

Key Method

Educator seeks out opportunities to learn from a wide variety of other professionals, reflects on the new information, and shares that information with others.

Method Components

What is a Professional Learning Network?

A professional learning network is an ever-changing group of connections to which teachers go to both share and learn new information. These groups reflect our values, passions, and areas of expertise. As an Educational Technology Coach, professional learning networks can serve to answer questions, deliver new information, and provide support.

Establishing a strong professional network

As an Educational Technology Coach, you will be tasked with supporting teachers with many tools across contents and grade levels. There are more options than one individual can possibly master. Having a professional network allows the Ed Tech Coach insight into tools, contents, and experiences that span a wider range than one can explore alone. By participating in these networks, it is possible to reach beyond your own experience and sift through material in order to more effectively support the teachers with whom you work. A professional learning network is a group of educators that share information, exchange knowledge, grapple with problems, and grow as practitioners.

Make your presence noticeable

Using a variety of online meetings, Ed Tech coaches can demonstrate their skills for others and then take on new learning themselves and utilize other educators' resources to support your own growth. You should create and maintain your own sites in order to share with the teachers you support.

Some ideas are:

- Blogs
- Video Tutorials or playlists
- Social Media Networks
- Online communities, such as NEA EdCommunities

- Meetup Groups
- Webinars

Attend networking events-both online and offline

Attend online and offline events, such as conferences or meetups, in order to grow your own practice. Presenting information at these events can grow you as a professional and allow you to reach beyond your school or district. Follow blogs that give you additional knowledge or make you think about your practice. Ask questions of the blogger or other followers. Attend webinars to see products in action and then reflect on how, or if, these can be supportive to the teachers you work with.

Share your experience and knowledge

Be sure to participate in online networks as a contributor by sharing information that you have found or learned. Respond to others in forums with constructive support or ideas.

Reflect on the material and experiences

Use digital tools to share information with others. Reflect on your experiences to support teachers who may be going through struggles with a tool or software. Through your reflections, you can support teachers as they sift through many tools in order to find the one that fits in their classroom.

Establish and maintain your online presence

Set aside time to regularly update your network, to respond to others and to make sure that your presence is an accurate representation. Be sure to keep your links and material updated to reflect current trends.

Supporting Research

The Power of Virtual Coaching
http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct11/vol69/num02/The-Power-of-Virtual-Coaching.aspx

Mackey, Julie. "Blending real work experiences and virtual professional development." (2008).
https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10092/1966/12611007_mackey.pdf%3Bjsessionid%3DEAF47473986D9A185AF2D
sequence%3D1

Laxton, Amber, et al. *A Guide to the Adult Learning Ed-Tech Market*. Digital Promise, 2017, *A Guide to the Adult Learning Ed-Tech Market*.
http://digitalpromise.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/accelerating-learning-for-adult-education.pdf

DuFour, Richard, and Casey S. Reason. Professional Learning Communities at Work and Virtual Collaboration: on the Tipping Point of Transformation. Solution Tree Press, 2016.
http://www.nea.org/tools/63691.htm

McConnell, Tom J., et al. "Virtual professional learning communities: Teachers' perceptions of virtual versus face-to-face professional development." *Journal of Science Education and Technology* 22.3 (2013): 267-277
https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/37234299/McConnelletalJoST2012.pdf?
AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1524605375&Signature=xUgnDsz2DBJtZPkSrXLKhONDjsE%3D&respo

content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DVirtual_Professional_Learning_Communitie.pdf

King, Kathleen P. "Professional learning in unlikely spaces: Social media and virtual communities as professional development." *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (iJET)* 6.4 (2011): 40-46. http://www.online-journals.org/index.php/i-jet/article/view/1765/2013

Knight, Jim. "What Good Coaches Do." Educational Leadership, vol. 69, no. 2, Oct. 2011, www.bcpss.org/bbcswebdav/institution/PUBLICINFO1112/CAO%20Leadership%20Institute%20SY11-12/December%206-9,%202011/What%20Good%20Coaches%20Do.pdf

West, Lucy, and Antonia Cameron. Challenging Assumptions About Coaching. Challenging Assumptions About Coaching. http://metamorphosistlc.com/images/Resources/Articles/Challenging_Assumptions_About_Coaching.pdf

Resources

Growing your Professional Network
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonathan-long/8-tips-to-help-grow-your-_b_7562332.html

4 Solid Strategies for Expanding Your Professional Network
https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/4363-tips-build-professional-network.html

ISTE Standards for Coaches
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1700ciKbaolQlMhOV7MVphDyLh8jLRSnX

Professional learning networks from ISTE (requires membership to access)
http://www.iste.org/learn/about-iste-plns

25 Awesome Social Media Tools for Education
https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/social-media-tools-for-education/

Why use LinkedIn
https://www.colourmylearning.com/2013/02/how-linkedin-works-for-education/

How to use Facebook for Professional Networking
https://theundercoverrecruiter.com/how-use-facebook-professional-networking-10-useful-tips/

Google Tutorials

Google Classroom Training
https://teachercenter.withgoogle.com/training

How to use Blogger
http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/teacher-tools-blog/google-blogger-a-five-minute-introduction.html

Google Blogger Tutorials
https://support.google.com/blogger/answer/1623800?hl=en

Networking Websites

These websites can provide connections to other professionals.

ASCD.org
http://www.ascd.org/Default.aspx

Facebook.com
http://Facebook.com

LinkedIn
http://linkedin.com

Instagram
https://www.instagram.com

Twitter
https://twitter.com

NEA EdCommunities
https://www.mynea360.org/login

ISTE professional learning networks
http://www.iste.org/learn/about-iste-plns

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

Part 1. Overview Questions

200 - 300 words per response

Please answer the following contextual questions to help our assessor understand your current situation. Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

1. Reflect on your current professional network. What connections do you have and how do you use them to improve your skills as a coach?

2. Describe how you have contributed to a network as an expert or seeker of knowledge.

3. What do you hope to improve by working toward growing your professional learning networks?

- **Passing:** Response provides reasonable and accurate information that justifies the reason for choosing this micro-credential to address specific needs of both the teacher and the student. Educator includes a learning goal that describes what they hope to gain form earning this micro-credential.

Part 2. Work Examples / Artifacts

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following **three artifacts** as evidence of your learning. *Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.*

Artifact 1: Beginning List and Description

Describe your state of networking at the beginning of this micro-credential work. List the professional networks in which you actively participate. Write a summary of your networking connections and how you use them.

Artifact 2: Problem of Practice Solution

Document how you have used your professional network to solve a problem of practice. Describe the problem you were trying to solve and how you explored or connected with others to solve all, or a portion of, this problem. Explain how you used the information gained through your professional learning network to support an educator in their their growth, as well as new networks that you have explored while working on this micro-credential. You can use a screencast, annotated screenshots, or a reflective journal to document the steps you went through.

Artifact 3: Website or Blog Share

Share your professional blog or website to demonstrate your reflective process and how you use information gained through networking to improve your skills as an Ed Tech Coach or to support the teachers you work with.

Combine your artifacts into one document with links for the assessor and upload into your NEA certification bank account.

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
Artifact 1: Beginning List and Description	Lists the group(s) that the educator participated in before taking on this micro-credential. Describes the way in which the educator uses their list their professional growth.	Lists the groups the educator participated in, but does not reflect how the educator uses them or how they improve the educator's professional practice.	Does not list professional networks, nor is there a reflection on the way in which they support the educator's growth.
Artifact 2: Problem of Practice Solution	Describes a problem of practice in either the educator's own practice or a teacher that the educator supports. Explains clearly the steps that the educator went through to use their PLN to find a solution and explains how the educator shared that information.	Your problem of practice is defined; it is either your own or a teacher whom you support. You share a solution but do not show how using your professional learning community supported you in this.	There is no problem of practice shared or no demonstration of using a PLN to seek out a solution. No indication of how the information was shared with a supported teacher.
Artifact 3: Website or	The website or blog is	The website is shared	Website or Blog is

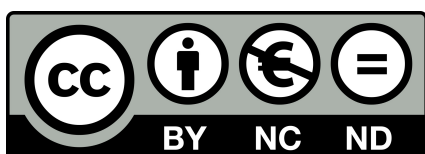| Blog | shared with the assessors.

Artifact shows how the educator has captured information that is relevant to the teachers with whom the educator works.

Information supports growth of teachers and may be searchable or organized in a way that encourages teachers to grow professionally or become participants in their own PLN | with the assessors.

The artifact includes information but does not connect to outside networking tools.

Information is limited to troubleshooting information, but does not connect teachers to a wider network. | missing or the information is limited to troubleshooting information.

Does not connect to an outside network or encourage teachers to grow professionally. |

Part 3 Reflection

400 - 500 words

Please answer the following reflective questions. Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

1. How has building your professional network changed your instruction?

2. In what way does increasing your global connections support your growth as a professional Educational Technology Coach?

3. What can you gain from a larger network that you cannot achieve alone?

- **Passing:** Reflection provides evidence that this activity has had a positive impact on both educator practice and student success. Specific examples are cited directly from personal or work-related experiences to support claims. Also included are specific actionable steps the demonstrate how new learning will be integrated into future practices.