



# Online Professional Development for Educators

DOT-COM/InterAction Speaker Series

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Harvard Graduate School of Education

6 May 2004



**WIDEWorld**  
online learning for educators

# Goals for today

- What is **understanding**?
- What is **Teaching for Understanding**?
- What is **effective professional development**?
- What are challenges to **scaling up** effective professional development?
- How can **online technologies** support effective professional development?





# What is Understanding?

Understanding is a **capacity to think and act flexibly** with what you know.

Understanding is **developed and demonstrated through performances.**



# How do we Teach for Understanding?

Frame **generative curriculum topics**

Define explicit **understanding goals**

Promote student **performances** that develop and demonstrate **understanding**

Provide **ongoing assessment** from multiple people using public criteria to suggest improvements

Support reflective, collaborative **communities of learners**

# Effective Professional Development

## Content

- Focuses on clear goals anchored in student learning
- Derives from research on exemplary practice and focused on specific issues of curriculum and pedagogy

## Process

- Embodies a theory of adult learning
- Develops collaborative practice within and across schools
- Models effective pedagogical practice consistent with message
- Provides ongoing feedback around teacher and student learning

## Context

- Involves school leaders and staff
- Takes place in schools and classrooms
- Maintains focus on continuous improvement over time
- Builds local capacity to sustain system-wide improvement

Adapted from Elmore, R. F. (2002, Spring). Bridging the gap between standards and achievement: the imperative for professional development in education [www]. Albert Shanker Institute. Retrieved Nov. 4, 2003, from the World Wide Web: [http://www.ashankerinst.org/Downloads/Bridging\\_Gap.pdf](http://www.ashankerinst.org/Downloads/Bridging_Gap.pdf)



# Professional Development as Teaching for Understanding

Make professional development **generative**

Define clear **understanding goals**

Promote **active learning and application** of principles in practice

Provide **frequent coaching** with feedback

Build professional, reflective, collaborative **communities**



# Challenges: Scaling Up Effective Professional Development

- Bridging the knowledge-action gap
- Not enough coaches
- Connecting across space and time
- Maintaining high quality, research-based content: “telephone effect”
- Adapting to local context
- Sustaining support over time



# The Promise of Online Professional Development

- creates and supports teachers in learning communities
- archives vivid images of exemplary practice
- provides new structures and media for reflecting, communicating, and acting;
- allows for construction and discovery of knowledge;
- expands access to information, networks, people, and ideas;
- increases the flexibility of time and places for learning.

National Staff Development Council. (2001). E-learning for educators: implementing the standards for staff development [pdf].

National Staff Development Council/National Institute for Community Innovations. Retrieved Nov. 24, 2003, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.nsd.org/library/authors/e-learning.pdf> and National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF). (2003) No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children.



How can new technologies support  
professional development?

**WIDEWorld**

online learning for educators

<http://wideworld.pz.harvard.edu>



**WIDEWorld**  
online learning for educators

# Education with New Technologies: Networked Learning Community

Designed to help educators develop, enact, and  
assess effective ways of using new technologies.

Registered members pick up your [Backpack](#).



Problems using the site? [See site requirements.](#)  
See the ENT [News Kiosk](#) for information about the new ENT Forums.

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ENT  
Library



Welcome Center



Learning Center



Workshop



Meeting Hall



Library



Gallery



Backpack

Category: Integrating Technology with Curriculum Resources Found: 75

	Resource Name	Comments	Recommendations
1.	<a href="#">TeachersFirst</a>	[Comments]	81
2.	<a href="#">New Tools for Teaching</a>	[Comments]	44
3.	<a href="#">WebQuest</a>	[Comments]	26
4.	<a href="#">Ideas for Teaching Writing</a>	[Comments]	22
5.	<a href="#">Math Teacher Link</a>	[Comments]	20
6.	<a href="#">Using the Internet as an Effective Science Teaching Tool</a>	[Comments]	18
7.	<a href="#">Teaching For Understanding</a>	[Comments]	16
8.	<a href="#">Track Star</a>	[Comments]	16
9.	<a href="#">discoverlearning</a>	[Comments]	15
10.	<a href="#">PBS Teacher Source</a>	[Comments]	12
11.	<a href="#">Teaching History &amp; Social Studies</a>	[Comments]	10
12.	<a href="#">Math Forum at Swarthmore</a>	[Comments]	9
13.	<a href="#">Blue Web'N</a>	[Comments]	8
14.	<a href="#">Jonassen, Computers as Mindtools for Schools</a>	[Comments]	8
15.	<a href="#">North Central Regional Educational Laboratory</a>	[Comments]	8
16.	<a href="#">Web 66- Schools using webpages</a>	[Comments]	8
17.	<a href="#">Artevclonedia</a>	[Comments]	7



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# ENT Gallery



Welcome Center

Learning Center

Workshop

Meeting Hall

Library

Gallery

Backpack

## The Water Habitat Project

- Overview
- A Detailed Look
  - The TfU Framework
  - Standards
  - Timeline
  - How the Unit Worked (Including Student Work)
  - What New Technology Adds
- Materials and Resources
- What Students Had to Say
- What Parents Had to Say
- Acknowledgments & Conclusion

**The Water Habitat Project:  
Local to Global Environmental Education  
Sunnyside School, Pullman, Washington USA**

## OVERVIEW OF THE UNIT AND ITS CONTEXT

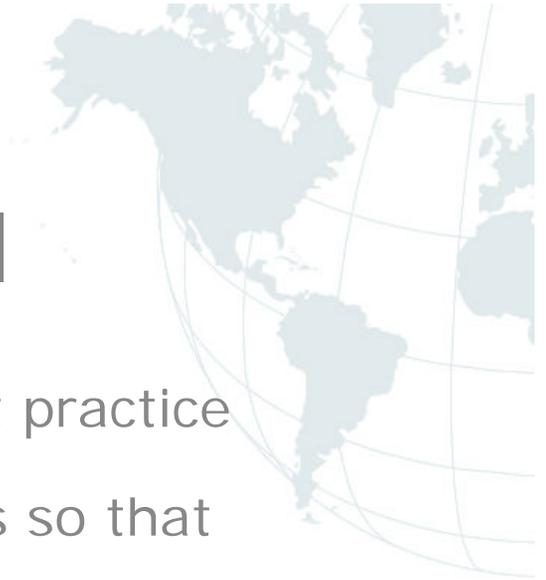
### OVERVIEW OF THE UNIT

The "Water Habitat Project: Local to Global Environmental Education" is an ongoing curricular unit in which the primary children in Kristi Rennebohm Franz's class at Sunnyside Elementary School in Pullman, Washington do a longitudinal study of a local pond water habitat. The students document their scientific observations with a narrative in their PhotoJournals. The substance of the photojournals are then used to collaborate with



peers around the world on understandings and issues of water habitats. The unit's integrated lessons are designed to meet state and National Standards in Environmental Science, Math, Literacy, Geography, Arts, Education Technology, Behavior Studies, and Civics/Government. The Water Habitat unit has been in development since 1993 when her classes first began doing observations at a nearby city park pond and used telecommunications in partnership with an I\*EARN project to collaborate with peers around the world on understandings and issues of water

# WIDE World Educational Model



- Build on **teachers' priorities** and current practice
- **Walk the talk**: Model desired approaches so that teachers learn from experience
- **Online tools to scaffold performance**
- Support **cycles of learning**, applying, reflecting, revising
- Personalized **coaching and feedback**
- Collaboration and exchange with a **community of colleagues**

# Teach about and model research-based approaches

Learners read “Welcome Notes”

- every 2 weeks for 12 weeks
- review of previous session: connect to participants’ realities
- new content & assignments
- instructor “walks the talk”

The screenshot shows a course page for 'Teaching to Standards with New Technologies' on the 'WIDE World' platform. The page has a navigation menu with 'Sessions', 'Overview', 'Discussion', 'Resources', 'Backpack', 'Help', 'Admin', and 'Logout'. The main content area is titled 'Session 1 » Overview of the Course' and features a 'Welcome to Session #1 from Stone' message. Below the message are photos of participants: Susan, Lisa, Geetha, Cheryl, Mindy, and Shannon. The instructor, Stone, writes a welcome message and describes the course's focus on using new technologies to improve learning. A sidebar on the left lists 'View all topics' and 'Work for this Session'.

## Work for this Session

### Understanding Goals:

- 5-a. Understand how to use the elements of the Tfu framework together as a basis for designing and analyzing coherent curriculum and educational applications of new technologies.
- 5-b. Understand how to use criteria to reflect on your work and the work of your colleagues.
- 5-c. Understand how to align your goals, performances, and assessments to support students' understanding.
- 5-d. Understand how to provide constructive, supportive feedback to colleagues.
- 5-e. Appreciate how to build an online learning community with other professionals.

### Understanding Performances:

[Reflect on Coach and Peer Feedback from Session 4](#)

“Nancy and Kostis noted that their lesson plans became more ‘student-centered’ when they...”

# Multiple cycles of feedback, reflection & inquiry

- **Study Groups** have about ten participants
  - Participants may enroll in **small teams**
- **Coaches** support and mediate discussions
  - Coaches often **recruited** from WIDE graduates (self-sustaining, capacity-building design)



Cambridge,  
Massachusetts

< **Instructor**

**Coaches** >



Boston,  
Massachusetts



Rochester,  
New York



Bangalore,  
India



Swanton,  
Vermont



Cotati,  
California



Arlington,  
Virginia



Athens,  
Greece

< **Study Group of Participants**

# Multiple cycles of feedback, reflection & inquiry

Learners respond to reflection prompts in the course Discussion Area.

During my science class I have seen my students **grow in interest** which translates to attendance, punctuality and **increased levels of understanding...**

I have been using **high levels of student input** in both the unit design and rubric building, and so far am seeing amazing results.

**WIDE World** Teaching to Standards with New Technologies

Sessions Overview **Discussion** Resources Backpack Help Admin Logout

Discussions: [Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Clear Unread](#)  
[Access Control](#)

Session 7

Session 7  
[Cafe](#)

**What are the key understandings you have c...**

- ▶ [Adding people to designs](#)  
(Beth McCracken) 24-Apr-2002
  - ▶▶ [Re: Adding people to designs](#)  
(Susan Ilias) 28-Apr-2002
- ▶ [Key understandings and questions](#)  
(Lambrini ZISSI) 27-Apr-2002
  - ▶▶ [Can They Stand Alone?](#)  
(Cheryl Campbell) 27-Apr-2002
- ▶ [Final Assessment: The Curriculum Question](#)  
(Dave Thompson) 28-Apr-2002
  - ▶▶ [Re: Final Assessment: The Curriculum Que](#)  
(Susan Ilias) 28-Apr-2002
    - ▶▶▶ [Re: Re: Final Assessment: The Curricul](#)  
(Dave Thompson) 29-Apr-2002
    - ▶▶▶▶ [Re: Re: Re: Final Assessment: The](#)

▶ **Key Understandings**  
*Shane Beckett* 09:19pm Apr 29, 2002 GMT-0500 (4)

Hi All

Hmmm what are the key understandings .... good question, it certainly takes some thought!

Much of my key understandings I have developed through this course have been developed through my actual practice of the TFU in my classroom. Once I got into this course and began to understand the framework I decided to jump in and try it out in my class, what did I have to loose right? The UG's for my new TFU unit I used were the same as the unit I developed in this course BUT the PU's are very different. However the level of understanding (i think) i now have for the TFU will pay off in the classroom.

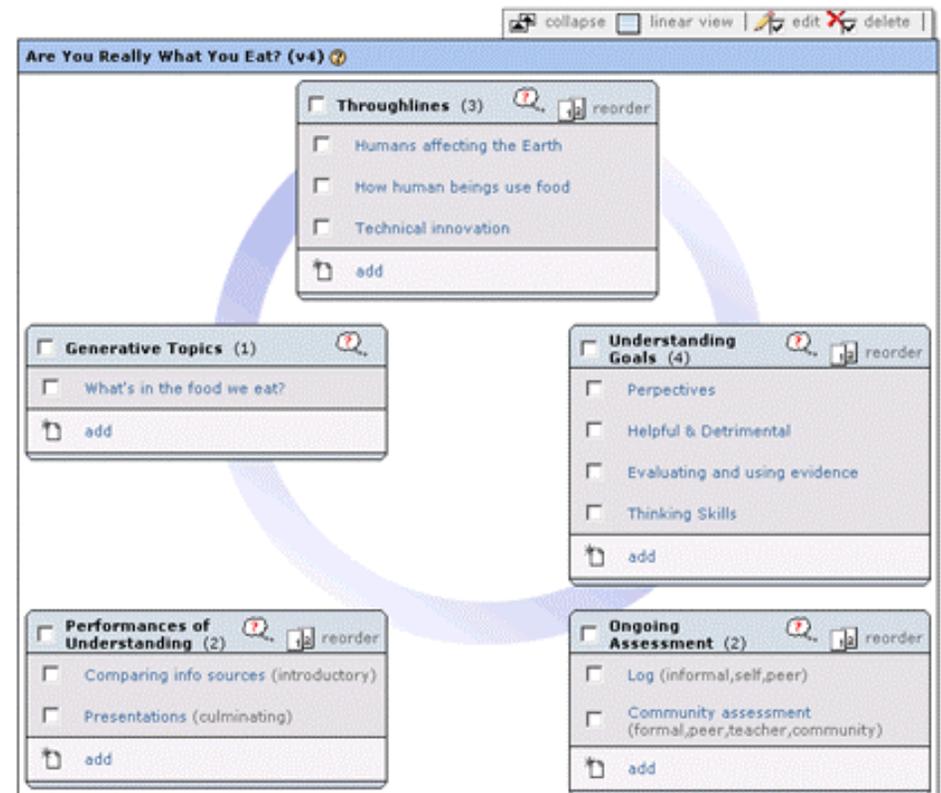
During my practice in the classroom and developing frameworks for both my practice and my course unit I have come to understand that it is a very empowering thing to have the students take ownership over their own learning by becoming involved in the design process. During my science class I have seen my student grow in interest which translates to attendance, punctuality and increased levels of understanding... all making my job easier and more enjoyable. I have been using high levels of student input in both the unit design and rubric building, and so far are seeing amazing results.

Some questions or concerns I still have are that of organization and time. It is a difficult thing to try to correlate all of your standards and course expectations into units and/or activities that the students have developed along with you. You almost need to design a unit overnight to meet the generative topics developed by you and your students... this is hard to do. One thing I tried that seemed to work was to use "convergent questioning" towards a unit design (and associated culminating activity) in order to achieve this goal. The students felt

# Supportive tools & communities

## Collaborative Curriculum Design Tool

- enables educators to co-create curriculum plans
- common framework for instructional design
- visual, online workspace



# Tools support collaborative practice and ongoing feedback

- Built-in threaded discussion area for members of a design team: feedback colleagues, coaches, instructors
- Learners can draft and revise their work, attach documents, ask for assistance

I want to share my **excitement** with you... about the fascinating things I have learnt since I joined this course. One of them is the issue of **collaborative learning**...

Look at [your UGs] after feedback from coaches or colleagues. You realize that there were many loopholes which **you could not detect when you were alone.**

The screenshot displays the CCDT (collaborative curriculum design tool) interface. The top navigation bar includes 'design', 'COLLABORATE', and 'end product'. Below this, there are tabs for 'MESSAGE BOARD', 'manage team', and 'view feedback'. The left sidebar shows 'My discussion preferences' and a tree view for 'Bollen's Design' with sub-items like 'Messing About', 'Practice Msg. Board', and 'Re: Practice Msg. Board'. The main content area shows a message from 'Bollen Chataa' dated 'Fri November 21, 2003 3:30:09 AM' with the subject 'Re: Practice Msg. Board'. The message text reads: 'Hi Fellow Course Participants I want to share my excitement with you colleagues about the fascinating things, for the lack of the proper word, I have learnt since I joined this course. One of them is the issue of collaborative learning. You will agree with me that when you were working on your UGs, for instance, you thought they were in line with what you are doing. But look at them after feedback either from coaches or colleagues. You realise that there were many loopholes which you could not detect when you were alone. I can go on listing them but because of time I will stop here for now and to hear from you.' The message is attributed to 'Bollen.' and includes links for 'reply', 'quote', 'top', and 'bottom'.

# Resources support collaborative practice and ongoing feedback

The ENT Gallery website features a navigation bar with icons for Welcome Center, Learning Center, Workshop, Meeting Hall, Library, Gallery, and Backpack. Below the navigation bar is a welcome message: "Welcome to the ENT gallery". A paragraph explains that the gallery showcases practice by educators using Teaching for Understanding and new technologies in their classrooms, showing how curriculum designs get turned into actual practice. Two featured items are listed:

- 1. Connecting a Museum, Schools and a University**  
Topic: Developing Professional Communities for Educators  
Technologies Used: MAC/PC computers, Internet sites, tools and discussion forums  
ENT Resources Used: Collaborative Curriculum Design Tool (CCCD), WIDE World course  
Institutions: Plymouth Plantation, Natick and Plymouth Public Schools, Harvard Graduate School of Education  
Educators: Museum, school and university-based  
• [Take a look at this Pictures of Practice](#)
- 2. Boston Latin Academy, Boston, Massachusetts, Water Quality Project**  
Topics: Water Quality  
Grades: 10, 11  
Unit Length: 5 weeks  
Technologies Used: PC Computers, Internet, Calculator Based Laboratory (CBL)  
ENT Resources Used: [Collaborative Curriculum Design Tool](#)  
School: Boston Latin Academy, Boston MA

The Education with New Technologies: Networked Learning Community website is designed to help educators develop, enact, and assess effective ways of using new technologies. It features a central map with icons for Learning Center, Information, Welcome Center, Library, and Workshop. A "New? Start Here" button points to the Information icon. A note states: "Registered members pick up your Backpack".

Supportive communities with:

- forums for ongoing professional exchange
- resource libraries
- galleries with 'pictures of practice'

The WIDE World Alumni Community website features a navigation bar with buttons for Sessions, Overview, Discussion, Resources, Backpack, Help, Admin, and Logout. The main content area is titled "Session 2 » August 12, 2003" and includes a "Welcome, Alumni!!" message. A sidebar on the left contains a "Sessions" list with "Session 1" and "Session 2", a "View all topics" link, and a "Create/Edit Sessions" button. The main text area contains a welcome message for newcomers and a congratulatory message for past participants.

**WIDE World** WIDE Alumni Community

Sessions Overview Discussion Resources Backpack Help Admin Logout

Session 2 » August 12, 2003

Welcome, Alumni!!

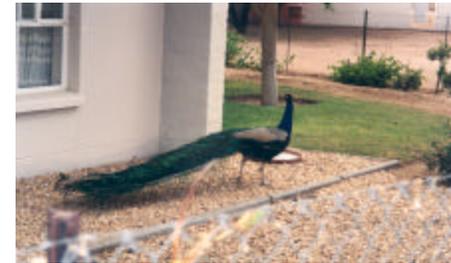
For starters, we want to extend a special and warm welcome to our community newcomers: the participants of the Summer 2003 courses!

You have completed another phase of your professional learning journey --congratulations! And welcome to the space where we hope you will find not only a "WIDE-r" community of thoughtful educators, but also the inspiration to pursue your next professional challenge.

We have created this community space in response to requests we have received from past participants. We hope it helps you keep connected to the content you explored in your WIDE course and the colleagues you came to rely upon throughout the term. How do you like it so far?

# Linking Online Learning to Onsite Support Local Facilitator Role (special thanks to Heidi Soule)

- Political Support
- Social Support
- Technical Support
- Educational Support
- Administrative Support



## Political Support

- Lining up support from key Ministry leaders
- Connecting change initiative to local policy priorities



## Social Support

- Face-to-Face workshops (four total)  
throughout 12-week online course:
- Orientation
  - Mid-course support
  - Closing showcase and celebration

Promote and model peer learning



## Technical Support

- Make sure participants have access to technology
- Assist in developing sufficient expertise to use the technology



## Educational Support

- Augment the work that WIDE coaches do through face-to-face coaching
- Relay learners' challenges to coaches



## Administrative Support

- Identify people who need to work together to create initiative to work and sustain momentum
- Provide synergistic energy to help coordinate and build local capacity to sustain the initiative





# Thank you!

- **URLs**

- WIDE World: <http://wideworld.pz.harvard.edu/>
- CCDT: <http://learnweb.harvard.edu/ccdt/>
- ALPS: <http://learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/>
- ENT: <http://learnweb.harvard.edu/ent/>

- **Contact**

- Stone Wiske: [stone\\_wiske@gse.harvard.edu](mailto:stone_wiske@gse.harvard.edu)

## References

- Blythe, T. (1998). The teaching for understanding guide. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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