



Connected
Educator
Month

District Toolkit

Expanding the Circle,
Closing the Loop

September 2013

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Technology

Greetings, District and School Leaders,

Connected Educator Month (CEM) is a month-long celebration of community, with educators at all levels, from all disciplines, moving toward a fully connected and collaborative profession.

The goals of Connected Educator Month include:

- Helping more districts promote and integrate online social learning into their formal professional development
- Stimulating and supporting collaboration and innovation in professional development
- Getting more educators *connected* (to each other)
- Deepening and sustaining the learning of those already connected

For more information about CEM, see the [U.S. Department of Education's CEM 2012 report](#).

[CEM 2013](#) is in October, which is just around the corner. To support your district in participating, we have put together a toolkit full of resources and materials designed to help spread the word and get your faculty involved, during CEM and beyond. We also have included information about how districts and schools can launch their own events, as part of CEM, complete with examples and ready-to-use tools to assist you in finding other districts and schools interested in collaborating. Be sure to check out the video interviews, in each section of the toolkit, with leaders whose districts are immersed in connected learning.

Please take a moment to find your starting place within the [CEM cycle graphic](#), by simply clicking the section that best describes your district or school. The link will take you to a list of resources that will help you make decisions and plans for a month filled with professional learning opportunities. We will add more resources to this toolkit as they are developed, including many resources that you will be able to use well after the month is over, such as a tool for evaluating the impact of your investments in professional learning through online communities and social networks. To make sure you receive all the updates, register for the [CEM Newsletter](#). We hope you will help us celebrate and make CEM a transformational part of your district's learning options both as a participant and by [submitting an activity or event](#).

Let the connected learning begin!

Click below to jump to your customized toolkit.

You can explore each one, or just pick the level that corresponds with your district.





Connected
Educator
Month

Curious

We're totally new to Connected Educator Month,
and we're curious about what's offered.

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If you found your starting place here at Curious, chances are you do not know very much about [Connected Educator Month \(CEM\)](#). What you need are details and maybe you are also interested in the “so what” of why you and your faculty should get involved. Did you realize that online communities and learning networks are helping hundreds of thousands of educators learn, reducing isolation and providing just-in-time access to knowledge and opportunities for collaboration? However, many educators are not yet participating, and other educators aren’t realizing the full benefits. In many cases, schools, districts, and states also are not recognizing and rewarding this essential professional learning.

For these very reasons, the U.S. Department of Education held the first CEM last year, in August 2012. Highlights of this inaugural event included:

- 170+ education organizations, companies, and communities involved
- 450+ events and activities provided, offered, or mounted
- 250,000+ references to the event across the Internet (growing to nearly 500,000 two months after the event)
- 4 million+ followers of the #ce12 hashtag by the end of the month

Based on the success and participation of educators across the nation and the world, the Department of Education has called together a second CEM, to be held in October 2013. This year’s event will have a special emphasis on *helping districts promote and integrate online social learning in their formal professional development*.

Invitation to Participate

We welcome educators at all levels and those leaders and stakeholders who support them to participate—this event is for you! The first step is to [sign up](#), which you can do in seconds. After you’re [signed up](#), you’ll receive regular updates about:

- Highly interactive webinars and other real-time events—many of which are headlined by education, technology, and community leaders—that you can register to attend
- Forums on key education and community issues in which you can participate
- Showcases, open houses, launches, exhibits, collaborative projects, polls, and other special activities of which you can partake or be a part
- Contests you can enter, badges you can earn, plus other resources ranging from starter kits to book clubs and classes to help you join the world of connected education or become more connected

Your Getting Started Toolkit

We know you are *curious* and may need a little help figuring out ways to engage your staff. The following are resources and materials to reveal even more about the exciting professional learning events taking place the entire month of October. We hope you find the toolkit useful. When you are ready to get educators across your districts to take advantage of the learning opportunities throughout October, continue on to the [Motivated](#) section.

See you online!

USEFUL LINKS

- CEM home page (full URL):
<http://www.connectededucatormonth.org>
- CEM home page (short URL):
<http://bit.ly/cem13>
- CEM calendar of events:
<http://connectededucators.org/cem/>
- CEM calendar submission form:
http://bit.ly/cem13_add_event
- Official Twitter hashtag: #CE13
- Send your questions about CEM to: cem@connectededucators.org. If your e-mail includes the words *state* or *district* in the subject line, it will be given priority status.
- U.S. Department of Education National Education Technology Plan 2010:
<http://www.ed.gov/technology/netp-2010>

TOOLKIT RESOURCES

What Is CEM?

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- Visit the **CEM website** to get the most **updated information**.
- View a **calendar of all the events taking place during October** (this is where you will find countless professional development opportunities for your faculty).
- We created a **resource center**, where you will find other ways to get involved.
- Use our **CEM PowerPoint slides** to introduce CEM to your staff.

- **Need some discussion points** when you show the slides? Here's a PDF of the **PowerPoint presentation**, which includes notes and scripted messages about CEM.
- This **one-pager** is designed to help you explain CEM to your faculty.

It's a Celebration! Invite Colleagues.

- **Get the CEM basic promotional package**, which includes the promotional graphics, sample text promotions, and postcard described below.
- **Download, create, and post promotions, using the CEM graphics kit**, which includes more than 20 promotional graphics, in a variety of sizes and approaches, plus the CEM logo. (We expect to be adding a fuller promotional graphic kit, with additional designs and sizes, in mid-September—we'll e-mail you when it's ready, **if you're on the mailing list**.)
- **Create, post, or send out promotions, using the CEM text kit**, which includes six pages of potential site promotions, sample tweets, e-mail newsletter blurbs, plus a dedicated mailing.
- **Hand out or mail CEM postcards**. We've provided a print-ready file for you and your staff members to download, make copies of, and distribute—a great way to reach out to the less connected!

Become a Connected Educator

- Brand new to connected learning? Then we have a **starter guide** just for you—a *get connected* activity for each day in October!

Meet Other Connected Educators

- Individual [connected educator profiles](#)
- Invitation to join **edConnectr**, a tool for finding other educators like you, with whom you can connect and collaborate

Follow and Join the Twitter Conversation

- Follow the [#CE13](#) Twitter tag to connect with other connected educators and keep up with all the shared activities and events.

STORIES AND EXAMPLES

The old adage goes, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” so a video must be worth even more. Last year, district leaders requested solid examples of districts that are immersed in connected learning and suggested that videos and interviews would be beneficial.

Included below are two videos: The first is a short video that includes several teachers and leaders sharing the value of being a connected educator. The second video presents a detailed example of a district engaged at the Curious starting point—*We’re totally new to Connected Educator Month, and we’re curious about what’s offered.* This video is intended to serve as a model for forward learning along your district’s connected learning journey. The interview was recorded in a Google Hangout and lasts approximately 25 minutes. District leaders address the following questions:

- What does your district look like when seen through a connected learner lens?
- What connected learning journey is your district pursuing? What are you doing that can serve as an example to other districts that might want to get from where they are to where you are?

- In what ways is your district participating in CEM?
- What lessons have you learned along your change journey? What are some steps other districts might take to move from informal learning experiences to more formal professional development options within the district?

Video 1: Connected Educators Speak



Video 2: Google Hangout Interview



Hilliard City School District Hilliard, Ohio

<http://www.hilliardschools.org/>

Dr. John Marschhausen, Superintendent

Interviewer: Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, Chief Executive Officer, Powerful Learning Practice

We want to take every professional development day, every learning experience, to the place it is no longer a single day—but continue those conversations by remaining connected, by continuing to challenge each other in our own learning space. We are working to develop our own network (online community) in our own space, where our administrators and teachers can live in this space and professional development and conversations become an ongoing part of what we do.

~ Dr. John Marschhausen

About Hilliard City School District

The [Hilliard City School District](#) continues to strive to nurture learners who are continually prepared for tomorrow. Our school district is committed to creating opportunities that allow our young people to engage in high-quality experiences that honor the ways they learn; offer them voice and choice in their discovery; encourage them to be the collaborative, social creatures they are; inspire them to think differently and persevere; and empower them to take risks.

The [Hilliard City Schools 2020 Plan](#) outlines the district vision for 21st century teaching and learning. The [McVey Innovative Learning Center](#) opened its doors in August 2013,

creating a new space where students are invited to learn and grow through experiences tailored to them as learners in the 21st century. [Dr. John Marschhausen](#), superintendent, affords educators districtwide the very same opportunities they are being asked to provide for students. He believes in the power of diversity, choice, collaboration, outside-the-box thinking, and risk taking for students and educators alike to continue moving us forward as a district.

Because we strongly believe that connected educators lead to even more connected students, our district is currently creating a virtual hub (community of practice) where our professionals will build connected partnerships that stretch far beyond physical boundaries. This hub will allow Hilliard City Schools educators to learn through a blended model, to have the opportunity to learn 24/7, to be empowered to explore their individual professional passions, to feel safe in being transparent in their own learning, and to serve as a practicing definition of global learning.



Connected
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Motivated

We love the idea of Connected Educator Month,
and we are ready to get started.

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If you found yourself at the **Motivated** starting point on our interactive [Connected Educator Month \(CEM\) cycle](#), then you probably already know a great deal about [CEM](#). Chances are you and your faculty even participated in CEM last year. What you need are a few tips on how to get started, more information about what's available, and possibly suggestions of ways you can do more than just attend events.

Something to consider this year, as a way of deepening your involvement, is to incentivize your faculty for participating in CEM. Go beyond just letting everyone know about all the learning opportunities in October, and consider how you could begin to form a learning community related to the event. One idea is to work together, in teams, through the [Connected Educator Starter Kit](#). You can earn digital badges to display on the blogs, wikis, or other spaces you will be creating as you work through the activities. Or, maybe consider leveraging the book clubs, book talks, and Twitter chats taking place regarding the **CEM featured books**. These learning opportunities will be offered throughout the month of October. (More information will be available soon—you're on the CEM mailing list, right?) Even better, why not offer continuing education credits for those educators who complete all the book club activities?

Another way to guide and support the learning and collaboration of educators across your district during CEM is to request a district page on the CEM website. District pages will be available beginning in mid-September. On your district page, you'll be able to share your goals for participation, post announcements, and highlight a set of activities and events you've chosen, from the general CEM calendar, that are particularly well suited for educators in your

district. You might consider awarding continuing education credit for participating in these events as well. To request your page, write to cem@connectededucators.org.

Your Getting Started Toolkit

We know you are *motivated* and are ready to get started. Below we have put together some resources and materials to help you and your faculty plug into all the exciting professional learning events taking place during CEM. We hope you find the toolkit useful. See you online!

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Connected Educator 101

- Brand new to connected learning? Then we have created a **starter guide** just for you! The guide offers a *get connected* activity for each day in October. The guide was created with individuals in mind, but why not have your entire staff complete the activities together? Badges are awarded for each step completed within the **starter kit** activities.
- Consider creating a **tic-tac-toe type handout** with simple *first step* activities, from the CEM calendar, for folks to participate in. Have each faculty member commit to doing three activities.

Follow Along

- **Follow the #CE13** Twitter tag to connect with other connected educators and keep up with all the shared activities and events.
- Add the **CEM Twitter widget code** for your website during the month or throughout the year.
- Can't think of what to tweet? Here are some **CEM sample tweets and e-mail and newsletter messages** to use throughout the month.

Motivate and Incentivize

- **Award badges** for participation in CEM. Create your own badges, or use those created by other CEM participants. (Badges are awarded as you complete the [individual starter kit](#).) Use the [submission form](#) to add your connected educator badges to the badge collection.
- Encourage, in more formal ways, participation in one of the book clubs, forum discussions, open house events and tours, panel discussions, and other activities.
- **Consider offering continuing education credits** for staff participation.

Connect and Collaborate

- Use the individual [connected educator profiles](#) to build the case of what connected education looks like.
- Then have everyone join [edConnectr](#), a tool for finding other educators with whom you can connect and collaborate. We will be able to offer districts with high levels of participation aggregate data on what their educators in different roles report they need help with, are interested in, and can help others with in order to support planning for professional learning beyond October.
- **Set a simple goal.** How about everyone finds one educator with whom to connect your classrooms and schools related to a measurable learning goal?

STORIES AND EXAMPLES

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Included below are two videos: The first is a short video that includes several connected leaders sharing the value of being a connected educator. The second video presents a detailed example of a district engaged at the *Motivated starting point—We love the idea of Connected Educator Month, and we are ready to get started*. This video is intended to serve as a model for forward learning along your district’s connected learning journey. The interview was recorded in Google Hangout and lasts approximately 25 minutes. District leaders address the following questions:

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Video 1: Connected Educators Speak



Video 2: Google Hangout Interview



Burlington Public School District Burlington, Massachusetts

http://www.burlington.org/residents/schools/burlington_public_schools/index.php

Patrick Larkin, Assistant Superintendent

Interviewer: Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, Chief Executive Officer, Powerful Learning Practice

They are starting to see how being connected can get their own messages out of their classrooms, connect with students outside class and connect with parents. On a low level a lot of what we have done has been communication. I feel communication is one of the most important things we do from a school standpoint. Just from something as basic as blogging the transformation has been pretty dramatic. When I first started

in Burlington I asked the superintendent if I could start a blog and he said, “NO.” And then the next year we got a new superintendent and he started his own blog—so there were two of us blogging and now again four years later we literally have hundreds of blogs across the district. Teachers are sharing basic information but they are also having philosophical conversations about homework and really thinking deeply about changing the way we “do” school.

~Patrick Larkin

About Burlington Public Schools

Connected learning is a critical skill that all of our students need to master for success in the 21st century. With this in mind, Burlington Public Schools (BPS) supports its staff with a number of ways to enhance their own connected learning skills. Our [BPS Educational Technology Team](#) website provides an ever-expanding list of resources and opportunities to support teachers in this endeavor. We are fortunate to have a rapidly growing number of *connected educators* who are able to support and model for their colleagues the amazing learning opportunities available for those individuals who know how to build an online learning network. You can follow our district conversations on Twitter, under the hashtags #BPSChat and #BHSChat. The following are a few of the BPS staff members who are leading our journey as a connected school district:

Eric Conti, Superintendent of Schools

Patrick Larkin, Assistant Superintendent

Dan Callahan, K–5 Instructional Technology Specialist

Dennis Villano, Director of Technology Integration

Diana Marcus, Grade 5 Teacher and Burlington Educator Association President



Connected
Educator
Month

Supportive

We are interested in ways to make Connected Educator Month part of our district's professional development.

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Congratulations! If you found yourself, using the interactive [Connected Educator Month \(CEM\) cycle](#), here at **Supportive**, then your district is well on its way along the connected learning path. Chances are you not only know about CEM but you are interested in making every month's focus include some aspect of connected learning. Why not use CEM as the catalyst to creating local policy, procedures, and protocols that will allow for connected learning to become part of the day-to-day activities of your school or district?

One idea is to have educators create professional learning plans based on the professional development offerings and archives that will be part of CEM. The Connected Educators team is developing a tool to help educators do just this—the tool will be released during CEM. If you don't want to wait that long, create an online form that educators submit, with activities they plan to attend (or archives they will review after October) and what they hope to learn. Ideally, align the form with school improvement goals and other professional learning measures you have in place to show how connected learning aligns with school and district priorities. Consider ways to credential or incentivize participation, such as by awarding continuing education units for badges earned—use the badges in the [Connected Educators badge catalog](#), or issue your own badges.

Another way to guide and support the learning and collaboration of educators across your district during CEM is to request a district page on the CEM website. District pages will be available beginning in mid-September. On your

district page, you'll be able to share your goals for participation, post announcements, and highlight a set of activities and events you've chosen, from the general CEM calendar, that are particularly well suited for educators in your district. You might consider awarding continuing education credit for participating in these events as well. To request your page, write to cem@connectededucators.org.

Your Moving Toward the Goal Toolkit

To help you support your district in making connected learning a daily affair, we created an *all-access toolkit*. The following are resources and materials to help you and your faculty plug into professional learning events taking place during CEM and beyond. The great news is that our help doesn't stop here. During CEM, we will release a second iteration toolkit created specifically for districts that are ready to go deeper and begin to integrate connected learning in more formal ways throughout the year. There will be examples, models, recommendations, templates, and more. Make sure you have [signed up](#) for the mailing list, and you will receive your copy.

We hope you find the toolkit useful.

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- Consider creating a **tic-tac-toe type handout** with simple *first step* activities, from the CEM calendar, for folks to participate in. Have

each faculty member commit to doing three activities.

- Develop a **connected coach program**, in which staff members immersed in connected learning can be paired with staff who are just beginning. Then, create a shared space (Google Doc, blog, wiki), where goals and outcomes or reflection on the learning can be captured, as a way to motivate other educators.

Follow Along

- Follow the [#CE13](#) Twitter tag to connect with other connected educators and keep up with all the shared activities and events.
- Add the **CEM Twitter widget code** for your website during the month or throughout the year.
- Can't think of what to tweet? Here are some [CEM sample tweets and e-mail and newsletter messages](#) to use throughout the month.
- Consider **hosting a Twitter hashtag chat**, during October, related to a topic aligned with your district's learning goals. Invite not only your faculty but other educators from around the world to participate, by submitting your event to the CEM calendar.

Connect and Collaborate

- Use the individual [connected educator profiles](#) to build the case of what connected education looks like.
- Then have everyone join [edConnectr](#), a tool for finding other educators with whom you can connect and collaborate. We will be able to offer districts with high levels of participation aggregate data on what their educators in different roles report they need

help with, are interested in, and can help others with in order to support planning for professional learning beyond October.

- **Set a simple goal.** How about everyone finds one educator with whom to connect their classrooms or schools related to a measurable learning goal? Or maybe use the [edConnectr](#) tool to find several global partners with whom to collaborate all year long.
- **Collaborative action research** is a wonderful way to create collective efficacy in your schools. Why not let CEM inspire a topic for your school teams to research regarding a school improvement goal?
- Why not lead a few **CEM activities of your own**? Encourage your faculty to add events to the CEM calendar, showcasing the great work your district is doing. **Seed your brainstorming** with two documents full of CEM ideas—one document could include **high-level CEM considerations, themes, and showcases**; and the other document could include **ideas for specific formats and topics**.

Motivate and Incentivize

- **Award badges** for participation in CEM. Create your own badges, or use those created by other CEM participants. CEM will award badges for a number of types of participation during October and hosts a [badge catalog](#) that lists badges other organizations offer. If you decide to award your own badges, [add them](#) to the catalog.
- **Encourage formal participation** in one of the book clubs, forum discussions, open house events, tours, panel discussions, and other activities by offering some sort of credentialing.

- **Consider offering *continuing education credits*** for staff participation, on the basis of badges they earn, a digital portfolio, or some other means of documentation.
- **Put your event or activity on the CEM 2013 calendar.** The new and streamlined submission form will allow you to better tag your events and activities.

Celebrate and Recognize

- If your community isn't already part of the **Connected Educators Community Directory**, send us the necessary information so that we can add it; the directory is a natural service for educators to visit during CEM, and we'll probably be featuring it multiple times during the month.
- **Find ways to celebrate** and recognize professional learning goal planning, actualization of the planned goals, and collective success. Use badges, and leverage the CEM contests and prizes. (A matchmaker tool for districts needing prizes is being created and will be included in your updated toolkit.)
- **Differentiate learning by celebrating small steps** for those educators new to connected learning and deeper, substantial learning outcomes, such as collaborative action research or attending a connected learning course that offers graduate credit.

STORIES AND EXAMPLES

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- What connected learning journey is your district pursuing? What are you doing that can serve as an example to other districts that might want to get from where they are to where you are?
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Video 1: Connected Educators Speak



Video 2: Google Hangout Interview



White Oak Independent School District White Oak, Texas

<http://www.woisd.net/isd/>

Michael Gilbert, Superintendent
Mitzi Neely, Assistant Superintendent
Scott Floyd, Instructional Technology

Interviewer: Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, Chief Executive Officer, Powerful Learning Practice

Interviewer: Do you think it is important for a superintendent to be a connected learner?

Only if he wants his district to be a connected learning district. And only if he wants his teachers to feel comfortable about the fact they can try things and not do well and back

up and start again. If a superintendent wants to foster an atmosphere where people are not afraid of failure, then that superintendent needs to show that he/she has a very strong ability to fail themselves.

~ Michael Gilbert

About White Oak Independent School District

White Oak Independent School District (ISD) has prided itself on being at the cutting edge of digital learning practices. Our teachers are continually finding new ways to engage students through the use of technology. Web 2.0 tools are the norm in K–12 classes, while mobile device apps have become a leading contender for personalization of the learning process. Collaborating with learners from around the globe in an inquiry-driven mode gives our students a perspective of real-world application of both the content and the style in which they are learning. This will not only change White Oak ISD, but it will play an integral role in moving Texas forward as a change agent on the national stage. The ability to prove college and career readiness through inquiry-driven learning and instruction, with final products shared globally, is the right direction to achieve this goal.

Roughneck Blogs and ePortfolios Site [Blogging Central](#)

Viral Approach to Learning Forward

[Power On Texas \(article\)](#)

[Power On Texas \(video with specific examples\)](#)

Video 3: Google Hangout Interview



Waterloo Region District School Board Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

<http://www.wrdsb.ca/>

Mark Carbone, Chief Information Officer

Interviewer: Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, Chief Executive Officer, Powerful Learning Practice

Teachers are all professionals and we (as a district) want to respect that. When I reflect on myself— my learning—it is the best when I have some choice and control about how that unravels. There should be flexibility around the time, and maybe the topic and how I might apply it. That is very important. To me, it is the big picture, around things like reflection, sharing and thinking about how your learning informs your practice. That's critical as professionals and each and every one of us needs to find our way of doing those things. And yet somehow I think coupling that with flexibility and personal interest, as long as it is aligned with your primary goals, helps breed success.

~ Mark Carbone

About Waterloo Region District School Board

The Waterloo Region District School Board services 62,000 students through 120 sites in Ontario, Canada. The board recognizes the importance of providing a variety of ongoing professional learning opportunities for staff development. Within the context of our Information Technology Services department, we have an ongoing commitment to provide support for teacher growth and development in the area of technology use to support student learning and achievement and align the use of technology with best instructional and assessment practices and provide opportunities to help staff become a connected educator.

Waterloo appreciates and recognizes the importance of building capacity across our system and nurturing one's first followers. To this end, we offer a number of program opportunities to our staff. In our environment, staff are expected to use a Plan, Act, Access, Reflect model to guide their learning and classroom practices. Accordingly, staff are encouraged to use a variety of online tools such as blogs, wikis, Ning, Twitter, and Google Docs to support their learning process, in addition to internal face-to-face opportunities.

Four of our successful and ongoing programs that support our approach are outlined below:

1. **CATC by the Water:** Computers Across the Curriculum (CATC) by the Water is our summer technology based, **self-directed/self-organized**, learning opportunity for staff. This event is held off-site, away from distractions, and accommodates 100 teachers. We provide technical support from board staff and a group of facilitators in a 1:4 ratio so that our “technology campers” have a premium

opportunity to interact with their facilitator/coach around their interests and what they want to learn. Additional information about the event and our approach is available online at <http://catccamp.wrdsb.ca>.

2. **CATC Connection:** This program runs in both our elementary and secondary panels. Staff selected for the program are provided with a board mobile device (laptop or tablet) to complete independent learning, which is shared back with the group. Currently, this program focuses more on using Web 2.0 and social media tools in the classroom. Staff share their learnings through online communities of practice and through face-to-face focus group discussions. The learnings are valuable because they inform best practice and the changes that will be required.

3. **Powerful Learning Practice (PLP):** For each of the past five years, we have funded a number of staff to participate in the [PLP program](#) to gain experience in a job-embedded professional development process that includes an action research component to foster the reflecting and sharing in both face-to-face and online environments. We are seeing the positive impact of staff participating in this program as they, in turn, provide leadership by nurturing other staff at their schools.

4. **Futures Forum Project (FFP):** The FFP grew out of the action research project that a team of senior board staff completed as a PLP action research project. Details about the multisubject, integrated, and technology-enabled project are available at <http://blog.markwcarbone.ca/2011/02/02/wrdsb-futures-forum-project-goes-live/>. We have established an ongoing process to bring staff together both face-to-face and online for discussion, sharing, and reflection to inform our process of best next steps. The program has now been scaled in each of the past four years. It has been rewarding to see the successes and observe the impact on culture change and capacity building. Additional information about this program is online at <http://blog.markwcarbone.ca/2013/03/11/wrdsb-futures-forum-program-wins-award/>.



Connected
Educator
Month

Collaborative

We want to completely integrate the concepts of Connected Educator Month into our district's everyday operations.

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Impressive! You selected **Collaborative** on the [Connected Educator Month \(CEM\) cycle!](#) You are here because your district is systemically using broad, deep, sustained strokes to integrate connected learning not only systemwide but to other networks and online communities of practice (possibly many of them global). Chances are your focus is on the implementation of well-aligned plans (much of the implementation residing within your well-developed learning communities and teams) that facilitate a shared responsibility for sustained improvement. Your district has begun the process of reculturing, through the development of connected leaders who have a *learner-first* mindset.

We hope you are looking for ways to leverage Connected Educator Month (CEM) as a means for being intentional and purposeful about the ways your educators are connecting and the reasons behind the connections. One idea is to have educators create professional growth plans based on the professional development offerings and archives that will be part of CEM. The Connected Educators team is developing a tool to help educators do just this—the tool will be released during CEM. If you don't want to wait that long, have your teacher leaders create an online form that educators submit, with activities they plan to attend (or archives they will review after October) and what they hope to learn. Make sure that the form is aligned with school improvement goals and other professional learning measures. Possibly, have your learning communities and teams create a collaborative rubric that would help to nurture movement along a growth continuum related to not only school improvement goals

but connected learning outcomes. Consider ways to credential or incentivize participation, such as by awarding continuing education units for badges earned—use the badges in the [Connected Educators badge catalog](#), or issue your own badges. Create opportunities and time for play as a problem-solving strategy among your faculty to implement the things they learn during CEM and have them reflect openly about what they discover.

Another way to guide and support the learning and collaboration of educators across your district during CEM is to request a district page on the CEM website. District pages will be available beginning in mid-September. On your district page, you'll be able to share your goals for participation, post announcements, and highlight a set of activities and events you've chosen, from the general CEM calendar, that are particularly well suited for educators in your district. You might consider awarding continuing education credit for participating in these events as well. To request your page, write to cem@connectededucators.org.

Your Moving Toward the Goal Toolkit

To help you become a more *collaborative* district, we have created an *all-access toolkit*. The following are resources and materials to help you and your faculty plug into professional learning events taking place during CEM and beyond. The great news is that our help doesn't stop here. We will create a second iteration toolkit specifically for districts that are ready to go deeper and begin to integrate connected learning in more formal ways throughout the year. There will be examples, models,

recommendations, templates, and more. Make sure you have [signed up](#) for the mailing list, and you will receive your copy in the coming weeks.

We hope you find the toolkit useful.

See you online!

USEFUL LINKS

- CEM home page (full URL):
<http://www.connectededucatormonth.org>
- CEM home page (short URL):
<http://bit.ly/cem13>
- CEM calendar of events:
<http://connectededucators.org/cem/>
- CEM calendar submission form:
http://bit.ly/cem13_add_event
- Official Twitter hashtag: #CE13
- Send your questions about CEM to: cem@connectededucators.org. If your e-mail includes the words *state* or *district* in the subject line, it will be given priority status.
- U.S. Department of Education National Education Technology Plan 2010:
<http://www.ed.gov/technology/netp-2010>

TOOLKIT RESOURCES

What Is CEM?

- Get on the CEM **participating organization mailing list** (if you aren't already on the mailing list).
- Visit the **CEM website** to get the most **updated information**.
- View **a calendar** of **all the events taking place during October** (this is where you will find countless professional development opportunities for your faculty).

- We created a **resource center**, where you will find other ways to get involved.
- Use our **CEM PowerPoint slides** to introduce CEM to your staff.
- **Need some discussion points** when you show the slides? Here's a PDF of the [PowerPoint presentation](#), which includes notes and scripted messages about CEM.
- This **one-pager** is designed to help explain CEM to your faculty.

It's a Celebration! Invite Colleagues.

- **Get the CEM basic promotional package**, which includes the promotional graphics, sample text promotions, and postcard described below.
- **Download, create, and post promotions using the CEM graphics kit**, which includes more than 20 promotional graphics, in a variety of sizes and approaches, plus the CEM logo. (We expect to be adding a fuller promotional graphic kit, with additional designs and sizes, in mid-September—we'll e-mail you when it's ready, **if you're on the mailing list**.)
- **Create, post, or send out promotions using the CEM text kit**, which includes six pages of potential site promotions, sample tweets, e-mail newsletter blurbs, plus a dedicated mailing.
- **Hand out or mail CEM postcards**. We've provided a print-ready file for you and your staff members to download, make copies of, and distribute—a great way to reach out to the less connected!

Connected Educator 101

- **Supporting those staff members brand new to connected learning?** We have created a starter guide designed specifically for educators who need small steps! The guide, which offers a *get connected* activity for each day in October, was created with individuals in mind, but why not have your entire staff complete the activities together? Badges are awarded for each step completed within the [starter kit](#) activities.
- Consider creating a **tic-tac-toe type handout** with simple *first step* activities, from the CEM calendar, for folks to participate in. Have each faculty member commit to doing three activities.
- Develop a **connected coach program**, in which staff members immersed in connected learning can be paired with staff who are just beginning. Then, create a shared space (Google Doc, blog, wiki), where goals and outcomes or reflection on the learning can be captured, as a way to motivate other educators.
- Put **an intentional focus on global outreach and collaboration** as a means to learning. Help your faculty and students learn to create personal learning networks of their own that comprise subject matter experts and authentic connections to making curriculum come alive.

Follow Along. Lead the Way.

- [Follow the #CE13](#) Twitter tag to connect with other connected educators and keep up with all the shared activities and events.
- Add the **CEM Twitter widget code** for your website during the month or throughout the year.

- Can't think of what to tweet? Here are some [CEM sample tweets and e-mail and newsletter messages](#) to use throughout the month.
- Consider **hosting a Twitter hashtag chat**, during October, related to a topic aligned with your district's learning goals. Invite not only your faculty but other educators from around the world to participate, by submitting your event to the CEM calendar.
- **Create a social media policy** that supports open leadership and transparency. Encourage district leaders to blog, tweet, and share.

Connect and Collaborate

- Use the individual [connected educator profiles](#) to build the case of what connected education looks like.
- Then have everyone join **edConnectr**, a tool for finding other educators with whom you can connect and collaborate. We will be able to offer districts with high levels of participation aggregate data on what their educators in different roles report they need help with, are interested in, and can offer as help help to others in order to support your planning of support for professional learning beyond October.
- **Set a simple goal.** How about everyone finds one educator with whom to connect their classrooms or schools related to a measurable learning goal? Or maybe use the edConnectr tool to find several global partners with whom to collaborate all year long.
- **Collaborative action research** is a wonderful way to create collective efficacy in your schools. Why not let CEM inspire a topic for your school teams regarding a school improvement goal?

- Why not lead a few **CEM activities of your own**? Encourage your faculty to add events to the CEM calendar, showcasing the great work your district is doing. **Seed your brainstorming** with two documents full of CEM ideas—one document could include **high-level CEM considerations, themes, and showcases**; and the other document could include **ideas for specific formats and topics**.

Motivate and Incentivize

- **Award badges** for participation in CEM. Create your own badges, or use those created by other CEM participants. CEM will award badges for a number of types of participation during October and hosts a [badge catalog](#) that lists badges other organizations offer. If you decide to award your own badges, [add them](#) to the catalog.
- **Encourage formal participation** in one of the book clubs, forum discussions, open house events, tours, panel discussions, and more by offering some sort of credentialing.
- **Consider offering continuing education credits** for staff participation, or [submit a badge](#)—if your district or learning community offers badges to educators, and you'd like to see the badges promoted as part of our badge collection, here's a [simple form](#) you can use.
- **Put your event or activity on the CEM 2013 calendar.** The new and streamlined submission form will allow you to better tag your events and activities.
- **Create a work team** to start imagining and developing ways to credential and make credible informal online learning experiences.

Celebrate and Recognize

- If your learning community isn't already part of the **Connected Educators Community Directory**, send us the necessary information so that we can add it; the directory is a natural service for educators to visit during CEM, and we'll probably be featuring it multiple times during the month.
- **Find ways to celebrate** and recognize professional learning goal planning, actualization of the planned goals, and collective success. Use badges, and leverage the CEM contests and prizes. (A matchmaker tool for districts needing prizes is being created and will be included in your updated toolkit.)
- **Differentiate learning by celebrating small steps** for those educators new to connected learning and deeper, substantial learning outcomes, such as collaborative action research or attending a connected learning course that offers graduate credit.

STORIES AND EXAMPLES

The old adage goes, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” so a video must be worth even more. Last year, district leaders requested solid examples of districts that are immersed in connected learning and suggested that videos and interviews would be beneficial.

Included below are three videos: The first is a short video that includes several connected leaders sharing the value of being a connected educator. The second and third videos present two detailed examples of a district engaged at the *Collaborative* starting point—*We want to completely integrate the concepts of Connected Educator Month into our district’s everyday operations*. These videos are intended to serve as models for forward learning along your district’s connected learning journey. These interviews were recorded in Google Hangout and last approximately 25 minutes each. District leaders address the following questions:

- What does your district look like when seen through a connected learner lens?
- What connected learning journey is your district pursuing? What are you doing that can serve as an example to other districts that might want to get from where they are to where you are?
- In what ways is your district participating in CEM?
- What lessons have you learned along your change journey? What are some steps other districts might take to move from informal learning experiences to more formal professional development options within the district?

Video 1: Connected Educators Speak



Video 2: Google Hangout Interview



Forest Hills School District Cincinnati, Ohio

<http://www.foresthills.edu/>

Cary Harrod, Instructional Technology Specialist
Natasha Adams, Curriculum Director
Christine McCormick, Information Technology Director

Interviewer: Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, Chief Executive Officer, Powerful Learning Practice

We’ve learned one of the most effective things you can do is get some people who

are willing to take some risks who will put their toe in the water, who will start living in these environments and sharing out and developing. Then that interest and that excitement just grows and spreads to others. I feel like that is what is exciting about our district. We started small, we started with the early adopters and supported them in becoming connected learners and in being inspired from people in their lives, being connected on Twitter and we watched as they started living it every day for their own personal learning and then how that extended to their students and how what they learned informed their classrooms.

~ Natasha Adams

About Forest Hills School District

Although there is no single recipe for successfully transforming your district into one where students, teachers, and administrators are connected learners, we have found several essential ingredients that will ultimately lay a foundation where your entire school community sees learning in entirely new ways.

1. Invest in your leadership. From the superintendent to principals and assistant principals, all leaders need to have a deep understanding of connected learning. They need to actively build their personal learning network through the use of tools such as Twitter, blogs, and Google +. Immerse them in connected learning experiences such as [Powerful Learning Practice](#), [Educon](#), and [edcamps](#). Attend webinars and [weekly Twitter chats](#).
2. Create small pockets of teachers who are [risk takers](#), [adventurers](#), and [open to change](#). Introduce them to a variety of social media tools to support the growth of their personal learning network. Teachers listen to other teachers. When these innovators share the ways in which their learning is changing, watch the ripple effect happen.
3. [Reimagine what professional development looks like in your district](#). If we are asking teachers to change their instructional practices, to rethink what it means to be a learner today, so too must we change the way in which we offer professional development. Create multiple paths of professional development to personalize for your adult learners. During face-to-face professional development, model connected learning by inviting experts from your own PLN to Skype with teachers. Set up [district hashtags](#) to encourage sharing across the district. Offer graduate credit for both formal and informal professional development. Involve your staff in nationwide experiences such as [Connected Educator Month](#).
4. These are just a few of the ways in which you can begin to shift your district. Want to learn more? Connect with us on Twitter: [Cary Harrod](#), [Natasha Adams](#), [Christine McCormick](#).

Video 3: Google Hangout Interview



National Science Teachers Association

<http://www.nsta.org/>

Discovery

<http://www.discoveryeducation.com/>

Al Byers, Assistant Executive Director,
e-Learning and Government Partnerships

Steve Dembo, Director of Online Community
and Social Media Strategy

*Interviewer: Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, Chief
Executive Officer, Powerful Learning Practice*

You're right, I think that the resources or the experts can be nationally accessed, but in reality they are locally deployed. All things, when you look at the professional development literature, talk about being closely tied to that local curriculum and part of a local community of practice within the school, where the district mandates informed by student learning or local assessment data and student work samples are ongoing continuous, not a one-shot opportunity. So I think sometimes educators will reach out to networks like Discovery, NSTA, or others, but then they take what they learn and use it for their own local needs.

~Al Byers

You ask whether we consider connecting and connected educators to be important—connecting is the core of our community. People come to us, they know they have things to learn, but what they don't realize is shortly after learning in our community they become the experts and can start passing that knowledge onto others. A lot of times people do not realize they've got expertise that is worth sharing with others—that other people would benefit from. What we are trying to do is to foster that process, encouraging them to go out and create their own circles, their own personal learning networks and so on.

~Steve Dembo

About National Science Teachers Association

Developing worthwhile online professional learning communities that seamlessly integrate within the day-to-day activities of teaching and learning in districts and schools is essential for sustained teacher engagement and growth and requires deliberate planning, forethought, and nurturing as the effort unfolds.

First, providing a high-impact initial user experience is paramount. Time is the most precious nonrenewable resource teachers have, and if you want educators to come back and take a deeper dive again, making that first-time experience worthwhile and relevant is crucial. Facilitation by skilled moderators for nascent communities coupled with vetted content is important in this regard. Also, providing opportunities to recognize the contributions from members in the community is a critical component to success.

At the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) [Learning Center](#), we provide 24 trained online advisors who provide free live

chat support and moderate the integrated community forums.

Launching successful professional learning communities is not a set it and forget it exercise that will naturally propel itself just because access is available online (just because you build it doesn't necessarily mean they will come). Online teacher professional learning communities that tightly integrate and leverage both on-site and online exchanges as coherent year-long experiences within the district seem to show deeper engagement and higher repeat participation compared to those that merely "bolt on" a separate discussion forum tool as an afterthought to a face-to-face district experience.

There is an important proximal relevance where the online community should support the effective implementation of local district curriculum or strategic initiatives such as the implementation of STEM-focused authentic challenge experiences, or evidence-based student argumentation as part of science-based investigations. External online resources are nationally accessed but locally deployed. Our [Learning Center](#) has nearly 11,000 digital learning assets to support learning, comprised of e-chapters, e-journal articles, Web seminars and their archives, and interactive Web modules, called Science Objects, focused on particular science phenomenon.

Personalization of user content is also important. Our efforts encourage user uploaded content alongside NSTA's digital repository with the ability to aggregate, annotate, rate, and share bundled collections with other colleagues. In just three years, our [Learning Center](#) community has uploaded more than 50,000 personal files, shared thousands of collections of resources, and contributed

more than 24,000 unique posts across more than user-generated 2,000 topics within our 12 public community forums. Our problem is not we hope they will come, but how can we continue to effectively structure and manage the community to ensure teachers find the most relevant information and discussions from the volume of postings available. The RAND Corporation and American Institutes for Research and with support from the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education, respectively, are helping us in this regard. The GE, Exxon Mobil, and Hewlett Foundations have graciously underwritten our e-learning portal efforts.

From the 126,000+ active teachers within our online [Learning Center](#) community, which includes many districts, schools, and university cohorts with their own landing space, we find converging high-quality content with socially moderated learning discourse and providing roles to recognize psycho-emotional growth within the community seem to be the trifecta that encourages participation. Virtual badges and points linked to personal profiles and digital teacher portfolios, where administrators may affirm and recognize teacher contributions to the community and personalized learning seem to show promise. We have 40 virtual badges available to encourage community activity, document learning, and leadership roles at NSTA.

You may see our online professional learning community and the strategies above in action by going to: <http://learningcenter.nsta.org/discuss/>.

If you'd like to see the impact of our efforts and current research into online professional learning communities and blended teacher learning, go to: <http://learningcenter.nsta.org/impact>.



The Mission of the Department of Education is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

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