

**THE FORMATION OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
IN PRESERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION:
THE INTERACTION OF CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT
AND NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES**

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to examine the development of a group of preservice teachers over three semesters during the second phase of their coursework and fieldwork in the teacher development program at a major Midwestern university. The questions at the heart of the study were whether this cohort of preservice teachers developed community. What markers of community were evidenced? What contextual factors served to support or impede the development of community?

Data were collected through observation of their courses, a series of interviews with a sample of preservice teachers, and archiving artifacts of their coursework such as the course syllabi, reading materials, and their discussions online. Data analysis was grounded in theory about the nature of community, communities of practice, teacher communities, online communities and in a sociocultural theory of technological change.

The findings suggest that these preservice teachers began to form community during their years in the teacher development program. This community began to evolve from a community of practice into a professional learning community as they developed from college students into practicing teachers. However, the culture of the classroom – the physical arrangement of the room and the importance given to students' voices in class and online – played a large role in fostering and supporting the development of community.