



## I PRO 320: Socio- Professional Networking

An Online Teacher Community for  
the Chicago Public Schools



## The Problem

Schools and teachers are under tremendous pressure to improve student performance on standardized tests. With tight budgetary constraints and a difficult set of demographics, the Chicago Public School System(CPS) is particularly challenged. Little time exists in the course of the school day to provide effective face-to-face mentoring or for established teachers to share best practices, class management techniques, etc. with each other.

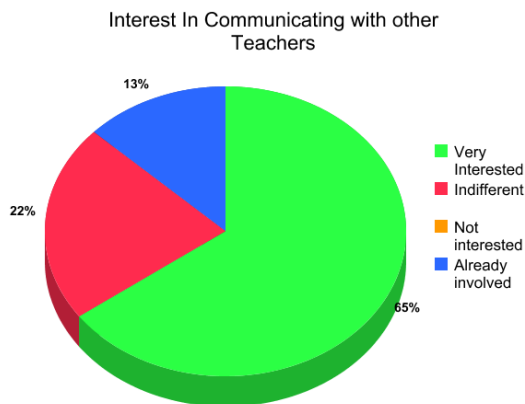
## The Purpose

*CPS lists as one of its goals the need for teachers to meet frequently to plan lessons, evaluate instructional strategies and participate in professional develop.*

The purpose of this IPRO is to establish a self-sustaining online community of teachers which could meet the above needs for CPS teachers with the potential to be expanded throughout the state of Illinois and beyond. This online community of teachers would allow virtual mentoring and electronic sharing of best practices, classroom experiences, individual teaching materials, etc.

## The Research

In the search for the perfect answer, the team researched alternative solutions to networking problems. Community based websites such as Wikipedia, Facebook, and MySpace were studied to determine which features would be most useful for teachers.



Meanwhile, a survey was conducted to determine how teachers communicate, how much they use the Internet, and what sort of interest they would have in a website like this. The survey was given to over a hundred CPS teachers. The results affirmed the need for this project. A snapshot of the results is displayed above.

## The Solution

In order to meet the communication needs of teachers, the team decided to implement the online community in the form of a website with a wiki and a forum.



**Wiki** – The wiki serves as a repository of articles created and edited by the users. This area of the website can be used to post lesson plans, science labs, or any other pertinent information which could be useful to other teachers.

**Forum** – The forum is a place teachers can actively discuss an issue or question posed by another teacher.