Academy of Process Educators — CASE STUDY

The Academy of Process Educators is a professional learning community that promotes engagement, support, and collaboration among educators who are focused on transformational change in education based on Process Education principles.

Getting to the Beginning

During the second annual Problem Solving Across the Curriculum (PSAC) conference in 1991, there were several discussions about formalizing collaboration among the participating institutions. That same year, as part of the first Teaching Institute, an evening was set aside to discuss the possibility of starting a non-profit corporation for inter-institution collaboration, the Institute for Innovation in Instruction. While there was a push to recruit members during the 1992 PSAC conference, (Beery & Beyerlein, 1992), the effort did not come to fruition. The desire for increased collaboration remained, however, and the idea continued to percolate within the PSAC community through the rest of the 1990s (Dan Apple, personal recollection).

In June of 2000, Stony Brook University hosted and led a Faculty Development Consortium Exploratory Meeting on their New York Campus in which 17 colleges participated (Stony Brook University, 2000a). The participants collaborated on and published a white paper outlining a Faculty Development Consortium (Stony Brook University, 2000b). This white paper was used for the next meeting of the Consortium in the Adirondacks in January 2001 (Stony Brook University, 2001). The effort focused on gaining commitment from institutions to write and submit a five-year grant to meet the following objectives:

1. Help new faculty members in higher education become very effective in teaching, mentoring, researching, and serving their communities.

2. Improve the mentoring skills of faculty and staff to facilitate the successful transfer of first-year and transfer students from previous educational environments into their institution and culture.

3. Develop the faculty development skills of a team of faculty from the Consortium who wanted to serve higher education by facilitating change at member institutions.

The Consortium was never formalized, but it did lead to additional discussions about a Process Education-driven Science, Mathematics, Engineering, Technology (SMET) Consortium (Western Michigan University, 2002).

The Association of Research-Based Practitioners in Process Education

In 2003, focus shifted to a major scholarship project: *The Faculty Guidebook*. Between 2003 and 2007, under the leadership of Steve Beyerlein and Carol Holmes, four editions of the *Faculty Guidebook* were produced (Beyerlein, Holmes, & Apple, 2007), with many of the individuals who had been involved with PSAC and the Consortium authoring and collaborating on *Guidebook* modules. A face-to-face authoring event occurred annually during semester breaks in January and it was through these collaborations that the desire to have a formal community of Process Educators was rekindled.

The community was initially formed when participating faculty members shared scholarship during a conference at Elmhurst College, June 28–29, 2004 (ARBPPE, 2004) under the guise of the Association of Research-Based Practitioners in Process Education (ARBPPE; see Figure 1). A planning meeting followed at Elmhurst, in December 2004, and the Association held a Process Education Research Conference in July, 2005 at Madison Area Technical College (MATC) in Madison, Wisconsin. This conference set a blueprint for the combination of active learning plenary and workshop sessions which has characterized all Process Education conferences since then.

The First Process Education Conference

Institutions and individuals who were interested in creating a more formal community of Process Educators met on February 11–12, 2007 at MATC and planned the first Process Education conference to take place July 11–13, 2007 at the University of the District of Columbia. The conference theme was to be *Student Success Through Faculty Success*. The program cover is shown in Figure 2.

During the two days following this conference, participants developed the initial Academy bylaws and strategic plan; they agreed on the structure and the name of the organization, and determined a six-month action plan, culminating in a January 2008 meeting at Brevard Community College in Florida. Joann Horton and Jackie El-Sayed spearheaded this effort.

The Strategic Plan 2007–2012 (Academy of Process Educators, 2008) was adopted at this meeting; it outlined the core values, vision, and mission of the Academy and set out the following goals:
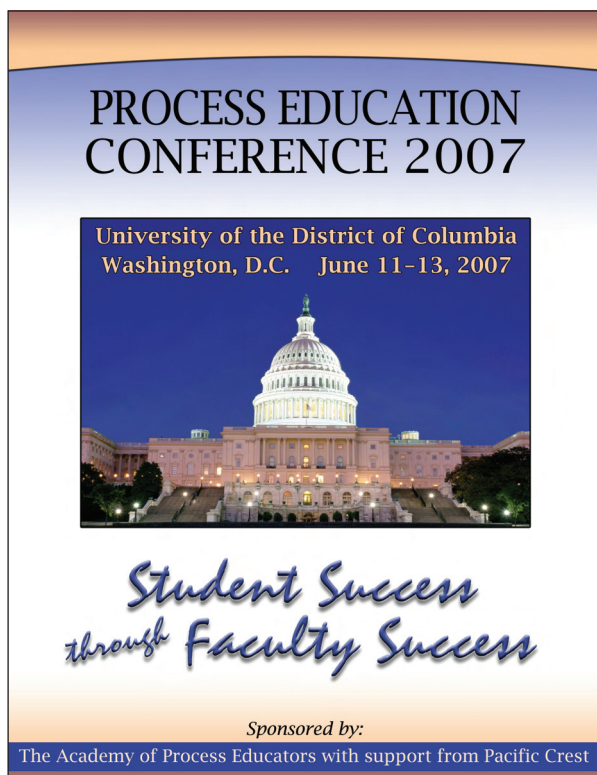
1. To publish an international journal on Process Education

2. To consistently deliver an increasingly meaningful annual conference with proceedings

3. To be a meaningful professional development forum for collaboration and educational innovation

4. To have an effective leadership team in place to guide operations

5. To implement the strategic plan on a consistent basis

6. To recruit, engage, support, and renew Academy members

7. To establish resources for the academy to be financially self-sufficient.

The participants also finalized the bylaws which set up a board of directors, specified their duties, and identified a slate of officers to be elected at the summer 2008 conference.

Figure 1 Logo for the Association of Research-Based Practitioners in Process Education (ARBPPE)

Figure 2

Kathy Burke agreed to work on the incorporation of the Academy in the State of New York (incorporation date: February 15, 2008), and set up a bank account in Cortland, New York. Pacific Crest helped offset the startup costs through a $5,000 grant. Additional funding came from an individual membership fee of $50, and the summer conference registration fee, thus ensuring the financial solvency of the organization.

The International Journal of Process Education (IJPE)

At the meeting at Brevard, Jackie El-Sayed agreed to become the editor of the *International Journal of Process Education* and plans were made to publish the inaugural edition of the journal in two years' time, at the 2009 Conference. As of 2015 the *Journal* has published 47 articles, and under the current leadership of Kathy Burke, will be publishing its eighth annual volume in 2016 (*International Journal of Process Education*, 2015).

Early Conferences

The second annual Process Education Conference was held July 16–18, 2008 at Hinds Community College, Raymond, Mississippi with the theme: *Striving for Quality: Aligning and Implementing Continuous Improvement in Higher Education* (see Figure 3).

During the business meeting part of the conference, bylaws and the slate of officers were approved (Academy of PE, 2012a; Academy of PE, 2015). Highlights of this conference included the inaugural Hall of Innovation, where members could showcase exciting practices in a poster session, and a day-long kick-off POGIL workshop. Future conferences have continued the practice of

Figure 3

Figure 4

showcasing the Hall of Innovation and holding kick-off workshops (generally much shorter than a full day). At the conclusion of the conference, the Academy held a two-day meeting during which plans were made for publishing the first edition of the *IJPE*. Treasurer Peter Smith agreed to work on obtaining 501(c)3 status (non-profit). Webmaster Denna Hintze was tasked with securing the domain name www.processeducation.org and setting up the Academy website which was accomplished in September, 2008.

The 2009 annual conference was held July 8–10 at Gaston College in Dallas, North Carolina, with the theme: *Measuring Success in Higher Education* (Academy of Process Educators, 2009; see Figure 4). At the Academy business meeting, the inaugural edition of the *International Journal of Process Education* (*IJPE*, 2009) was celebrated and a new board of directors was elected. Peter Smith was given a surprise Outstanding Service Award for his work in preparing and submitting the paperwork for the Academy 501(c)3 status, the application for which was approved by the IRS on August 30, 2009. The Academy held a follow-up meeting on July 11 when they discussed plans for the next conference, the next issue of the *IJPE*, and the projected 2010 research agenda. They also approved an Academy brochure (see Figure 5). In October 2009, Peter

Smith set up the Academy PayPal account, Denna Hintze set up the member area on the website, and the Academy published its first newsletter.

The 2010 conference was to be held at the St. Louis College of Pharmacy, so the board held a planning meeting there on January 8-10 to plan for the conference and revise the strategic plan. Through the work of past president Cy Leise, the wording of this plan was finalized and approved by the board at its February phone meeting (Academy of Process Educators, 2010a). In March, the Academy board approved an agreement with Pacific Crest, giving the company six free annual membership/conference registrations in appreciation for their continual support as evidenced by the generous start-up grant and reduced institute fees and e-FGB licenses for individual Academy members (Academy of Process Educators, 2010b).

The 2010 conference was held June 27–29 in St. Louis, MO, with the theme: *Preparing Today's Students to Solve Tomorrow's Problems* (Academy of Process Educators, 2010a; Figure 6). Highlights of this conference were the two keynote presenters, Larry Michaelson and Don Saari, and a visit to the Gateway Arch National Monument. The second edition of the *International Journal of Process Education* was distributed to the attendees.
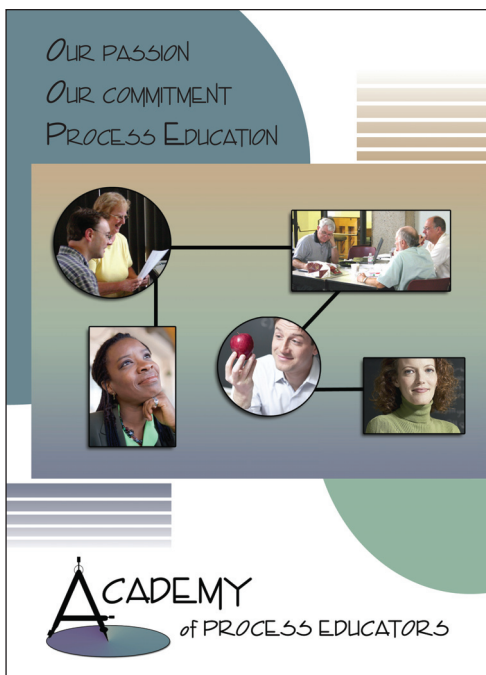
Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

The board of directors had originally been set up with three at-large members, each with a three-year term, but it soon became evident that more Academy members needed to be involved in governance. At the January 7–8, 2011 winter meeting at Kirkwood Community College in Iowa, the at-large board membership was expanded to four members, each with two-year terms. Also, because the positions of treasurer and finance officer had been limited to one term in the original bylaws, the board recommended that this restriction be removed to preserve continuity in these essential offices. Finally, it was decided to allow the audit committee to meet during rather than before the conference. These changes were approved by email ballot before the summer conference. On February 18, 2011, webmaster Denna Hintze, set up the Academy forum to facilitate communication among Academy members. This forum has been particularly helpful in planning the summer conferences since that time (see Figure 7).

The 2011 conference was held June 27–29 at Kirkwood, with the theme: *Facilitating Transformational Learning* (Academy of Process Educators, 2011; see Figure 8). A highlight was the ability to stay on campus in the same facility as the meetings. The third edition of the *International Journal of Process Education* was published for the conference.

Since 2011, the Academy has continued to meet twice a year. At the winter meetings much attention was paid to assessing potential *International Journal of Process Education* articles.

January 6–7, 2012	Georgia Tech
January 2–5, 2013	Georgia Tech
January 10–12, 2014	Valparaiso University
January 2–4, 2015	Virginia State University
January 8–10, 2016	North Carolina Central University

At the 2012 meeting, the strategic plan was revised to include local Academy chapters (Academy of Process Educators, 2012c) and the idea for an institutional membership was explored, through which up to 50 members of an academic institution could gain membership for a flat $350 fee. This was approved at the 2012 conference. Kathy Burke, Cy Leise, and Tris Utschig also introduced the first draft of the writing rubric at this meeting. This rubric was refined over the next three years and has become the assessment instrument for the *International Journal of Process Education* (Burke, Ouellette, Miller, Leise, & Utschig, 2012).

Conferences and Innovations Since 2011

The Process Education Conferences since 2011 are listed in Figure 9.

In the ten years of the Academy of Process Educators, the number of members has increased from 49 to more than 300 allowing ever more exciting opportunities for professional collaboration. The Academy has continued to innovate practice even as it upholds the value of collaboration. A recent innovation (introduced during the 2014–15 academic year) was a series of webinars integrating Academy members into Masila Mutisya's Professional Development course. The webinars allowed interested members to log in remotely and participate in interactive activities (Beyerlein, Burke, Mutisya, & Cordon, 2012). This experience was very successful and there are plans to repeat it.

Current Academy activities are focused on planning an expanded Process Education Conference in 2016 to celebrate 10 years of the Academy and 25 years of Process Education. Planned special features of this conference include a series of symposia addressing key issues in Process Education, more than two dozen invited talks from members who have helped shape Process Education and the Academy in significant ways, and a full day devoted to research in order to foster scholarship and grant writing related to Process Education.
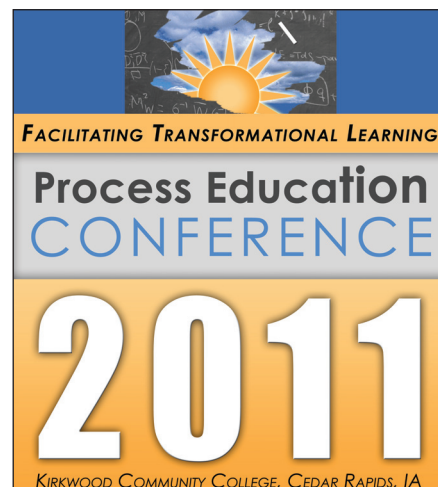
Figure 8

Figure 9

Process Education CONFERENCE 2012

CONFERENCE THEME: *Establishing Meaning in Teaching and Learning: Innovation, Reflection, and Scholarship*

Date	June 18–20, 2012	**Location**	SUNY Cortland, New York
Highlights	Book Chat; Todd Zakrajsek plenary		
References	(Academy of PE, 2012b & 2015b)		

Process Education CONFERENCE 2013

CREATING QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: PATHWAYS TO PROCESS-ORIENTED TEACHING

Date	June 26–28, 2013	**Location**	Hinds Community College, Jackson, Mississippi
Highlights	Transformation of Education article		
References	(Academy of PE, 2013 & 2015b)		

Process Education CONFERENCE 2014

Process Education & Flipped Classrooms: Assess, Engage, Innovate, Transform

Date	June 19–21, 2014	**Location**	Valparaiso University, Indiana
Highlights	Professional Development Panel		
References	(Academy of PE, 2014 & 2015b)		

Process Education CONFERENCE 2015

INCLUSION & OPPORTUNITY: SHARING THE PRACTICES THAT PROMOTE LIFE-LONG LEARNING

Date	June 25–27, 2015	**Location**	Virginia State University, Virginia
Highlights	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning		
References	(Academy PE, 2015b & 2015c)		

Process Education CONFERENCE 2016

TURNING FAILURE AND RISK INTO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Date	June 22–25, 2016	**Location**	Grand Valley State University, Michigan
Highlights	25th Process Education & 10th Academy Anniversaries		
References	(Academy of PE, 2016) (IJPE, 2016) *To Be Published in June 2016*		

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