NCSL
National College for
School Leadership

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What are we
learning about...?

Community leadership in networks

Who leads?

A development tool designed to explore
the enactment of community leadership in
organisations and networks.

Community Leadership Strategy

Networked Learning Communities

| learning from each other | learning with each other | learning on behalf of each other |

Who leads?

This development tool is designed to enable colleagues to identify whether their practice in developing community involvement, engagement and ownership also develops community leadership. It has been used successfully within a networked setting to help participants to determine how they involve members of their wider community in leadership activities.

The tool can be used in supporting colleagues within an organisation or within networks of organisations, in developing their understanding of some of the different ways in which community leadership may be enacted through dialogue, decision-making and action. In this activity, participants are provided with an opportunity to reflect on how community leadership is enacted in their own context and to consider how it could be further developed.

The 'Who Leads?' activity is designed to enable participants to:

- learn with and from colleagues by discussing, developing and exploring ideas about community leadership
- develop an understanding of the difference between a community focus, a collaborative focus, and an institutional focus of leadership
- identify where the focus of leadership is for current activities
- consider where the focus of dialogue, decision making and action could be for future work with the wider community

This activity is appropriate for all adults within any organisation or network of organisations wishing to engage with the wider community. You might be in a network of schools, from a children's centre, a health centre, or work in social services. You share a common interest in that you all want to work more closely with your wider community. You may also want to engage your wider community in undertaking this activity. For example, the views of parents, residents and local community groups could provide valuable insights and alternative perspectives about your practice. Ideally participants will represent different parts of your organisation or network and different sectors of your wider community.

The activity could be used as one way to engage your local community in debate about their involvement in the work of your school, network or organisation. It could also be done as part of a network or organisational self-review or action planning process. You should work with others to decide the best way to use this tool according to your needs and desired outcomes. □

Acknowledgements

Who leads?

Activity guidance

Resources

Each group will need:

● large flipchart paper
● felt-tip marker pens
● pens
● Blu-tack®
● a blank copy of the 'Who leads?' base board (see pages 6 – 7)
● Post-it® notes to write on
● a copy of the 'Who leads? – Moving forward' template for every participant (see page 9)

Organise…

● You will need at least 90 minutes for this activity.
● Any number of people can participate, although each discussion group should have *no more* than five people.

Introduction

5 mins   Outline how this activity fits within your own local context. Explain that this activity will be an opportunity to work and learn together to explore what we mean by community leadership, and to consider how we are discussing, deciding and doing things with our local community. Describe the activity and organise the groups. We will be working in groups of between three and five to discuss our own practice before learning from others.

Notes

✔ If you have invited members of the wider community to work with you, you may wish to ensure that they are integrated and assigned to groups to encourage their full participation.

✔ If working with colleagues from different organisations within a network, participants should sit with colleagues from their own institution, in groups of between three and five people.

Generating examples from practice

10 mins   Ask all participants to consider the question 'how do you and your organisation engage with the wider community? If members of your wider community are present eg residents, parents, you will need to ask them to consider the question 'how do local organisations engage you – the wider community?' Write down each example on to a Post-it® note. Everyone should use the same colours. Suggest one or two examples to illustrate the task eg school hosts coffee mornings for local residents, health centre consults clients about services, local community centre has four residents on its board. Provide sufficient time to ensure that each group has generated at least eight different examples.

Notes

✔ It may be useful to write the questions onto flipchart paper so all can see them.

✔ Ask participants to write their examples clearly onto the Post-it® notes so others can read and make sense of them.

Who leads

Reflecting on practice

25 mins Provide each group with a base board (see page 6-7). Groups need to consider the examples written on each of their Post-it® notes in turn and decide where they think it fits best on the base board. Work through one example with the participants to illustrate the activity. Before the conversations begin, ask each group to nominate a **commentator**. The commentator's role is to listen to the conversation and record on the flipchart key points, questions and issues raised in the discussion. The commentator feeds back any points if required. Provide sufficient time to enable all groups to place the majority of their examples on the base board.

Learning from others, learning for others

15 mins Once groups have placed their examples onto the board, ask the commentators to stay with their base boards and remain seated. Ask all other participants to move to sit at another table so they can see a different base board. Each group should now consider the pattern of engagement which is visible on its new commentator's game board. The placement of the examples will give an indication of who leads - who is involved in dialogue, decision-making and action. Ask groups to identify whether this pattern of current activities suggests **a community focus, a collaborative focus or an institutional focus for leadership**. Each group must now write down the three questions (see page 9) which they think would be most helpful to the group who created this base board. The questions should be supportive and should further enable the original group to develop community leadership further.

Developing practice

20 mins Now ask participants to return to their original groups. Give each group an opportunity to consider the questions posed by their colleagues and what action they may now need to take to further develop community leadership. Groups should record the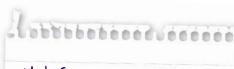 questions posed and their thoughts about future actions and issues arising using the template provided (see page 9). Groups should focus on how they would like to engage with their wider community, what kinds of additional activities they would like to undertake and why. For example, would they like to engage in more community focused decision-making or more collaborative action?

Plenary and moving forward...

15 mins It's very important that the whole group gets a sense of what was discussed in the room, so a commentator from each group should feed back 'next steps' and ideas to the whole group. This is also an opportunity to discuss the process which was used, give participants a sense of what will happen now, and empower all to take action.

Notes

✔ Advise the groups not to worry if one example could be placed in several different parts of the board. Groups should choose the location which they think is the best fit.

Notes

✔ If you have additional time, you could also ask groups to identify the different members of the community who are involved in each of the activities written on the Post-it® notes.

✔ Commentators should not talk during this part of the activity – they can provide clarification to the visitors by writing additional information on Post-its® or flipchart paper. Asking the commentator not to speak ensures that the group focus on the task and not the stories of the commentator.

Notes

✔ Commentators can speak again during this part of the activity!

Notes

✔ Give commentators and groups a few minutes warning before the plenary begins so they have time to decide what to feed back. ☐

Who leads?
Base board

❝ *Community conversation is a vehicle for people to express and share the diverse views that they hold, to negotiate and reaffirm directions and vision, and to develop social capital.* ❞

John West-Burnham & George Otero

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Who leads? – Base board

Who leads?

Dialogue

Community

Listening to and learning from the wider community about issues which matter to it – 'community conversations.'

Collaborative

Shared dialogue and learning between my organisation and the wider community about common issues – 'learning conversations.'

Institutional

Dialogue to transfer knowledge about issues which matter to my institution – 'instructional conversations.'

Deciding

Doing

The wider community decides…

The wider community takes action…

Deciding together with other relevant organisations and the wider community…

Joint action between my organisation, other relevant organisations and the wider community…

My organisation decides…

My organisation takes action…

Who leads? – Base board

To order copies of this publication including the Who leads?
Base board pull-out, please email **nlc@ncsl.org.uk** quoting
reference **WAWLA/Community leadership/Who leads?**

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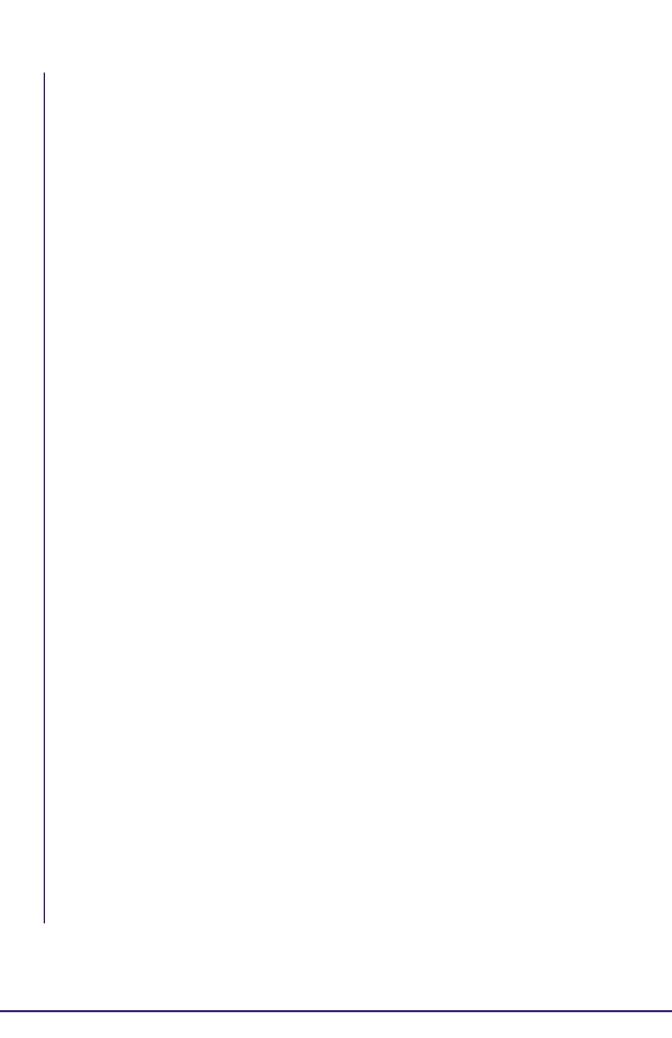School Leadership

Who leads? – Moving forward

Reflection for action record template Photocopy these pages.

After completing the 'Who leads? base board for your group, you will have the opportunity to look at the ideas presented on the base board of another group. You will be asked to identify whether the pattern of current activities suggests a **community focus, a collaborative focus or an institutional focus for leadership.**

You should use this record sheet to write down **the three questions** which you think would be most helpful to enable this group to move forward. The three questions should be supportive and should enable the group to move forward in further developing community leadership in their context. ☐

Questions

Questions from visiting group to be recorded here.

Action proposed

Action proposed for self and group to be recorded here.

Pause for thought…?

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

What are we
learning about...?

The 'What are we learning about…?' series is designed to make public the learning that has emerged from NLCs in the last two years.

The first nine titles in the series will focus on:
What are we learning about…?

- LEA involvement in school networks
- Establishing a network of schools
- **Community leadership in networks**
- *'Making mathematics count'* in school networks
- The impact of school networks
- Sustaining a network of schools
- Facilitation within school networks
- Professional development in school networks
- Leadership of school networks

To order a copy of this series, please email **nlc@ncsl.org.uk** quoting the reference **WAWLA/Community leadership**

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