

Networked Learning Communities

learning from each other

learning with each other

learning on behalf of each other

Why Networked Learning Communities?



National College for School Leadership

Collaboration rather than competition is the motivation for hundreds of schools in this pioneering programme that will transform learning experiences for children, teachers and school leaders. Across the country, Networked Learning Communities (NLCs) are changing the way we think about learning at every level of the education system.

Learning together

02

Networked Learning Communities are capitalising upon and celebrating the diversity which exists within the system.

By working in interdependent and mutually supportive ways, groups of schools have formed learning networks and are using diversity within and across schools as a positive force for knowledge-sharing and innovation.

In Networked Learning Communities, teachers and other educational professionals are experimenting with new and innovative approaches in the classroom, working in creative partnerships within and across schools to develop and share good practice. Inspired and challenged by fellow professionals, they are learning together in new and interesting ways.

As this professional energy and creativity is unleashed, schools are evolving into dynamic learning communities, where the latent potential within pupils, teachers and leaders is unlocked. In this way, Networked Learning Communities are taking hold of the education agenda, focusing on values of partnership and collaboration to create coherence within the ever changing educational landscape.

In Networked Learning Communities, schools, teachers, pupils and leaders are learning from each other, with each other and, ultimately, on behalf of each other.

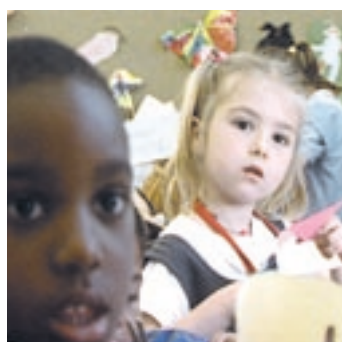


Networking – learning from each other

03

Collaboration is a more powerful, more positive motivating force than competition. Networks are about schools working smarter together, rather than harder alone, to enhance learning at every level of the education system. Strong networks make it easier to create and share knowledge about what works in the classroom, to learn from each other's experiences, to find solutions to common problems. By working together in this way, networked schools are making professional practice visible and transferable.

- Each NLC contains at least six schools and some have many more. Non-school partners include Local Education Authorities, universities and community groups.
- Schools tend to be linked geographically, but they are not necessarily in the same LEA or working with the same age group. Common experience, shared values and a desire to work in mutually supportive ways are the unifying factors.
- NLCs work within the programme for four years. Each Network has up to £50,000 a year in matched funding for three years. NLCs use this resource to build capacity for collaborative enquiry, Network leadership and joint learning activities. In the fourth year and beyond, Networks will be self-supporting.



“Schools should work together because it’s hard working on your own, but if you work in a team then you get a lot more done and more ideas are put in.”

Sophie, Year 8, Bradford

Networked Learning Communities are built around a shared purpose: to encourage, support and enjoy continuous co-operative learning at all levels of the education system. Improving pupil learning is the starting point, but Networks are all committed to working within six 'levels of learning'.

Learning – learning with each other

06

Pupil learning

Raising levels of pupil achievement is a primary aim and motivation for all schools involved in the programme. Every NLC has set its own, locally relevant, classroom learning focus which is placed at the heart of their activity as a Network. Whole Networks are using evidence and enquiry-based methods to improve classroom practice.

Staff learning and professional development

The best teachers are also students, learning with and alongside their pupils. NLCs allow teachers to experiment and innovate in the classroom, to shape teaching practice and policy together. Networks go beyond traditional CPD initiatives by valuing practitioner-enquiry and collaborative approaches to adult learning.

Leadership for learning and leadership development

NLCs tap into the leadership potential of all teachers. Leadership of Networks is shared within and between networked schools via two Co-Leaders, who may or may not be ‘traditional’ leaders. The NLC programme assumes that there is a much wider pool of latent leadership talent than the system currently harnesses. A commitment to providing a wide range of leadership opportunities within and between Networks allows new kinds of leadership to develop.

School-wide learning

The programme is designed to support the development of schools as professional learning communities. Schools working within Networks are becoming learning organisations. They are setting their own agenda for change in response to local needs and are generating capacity for continuous innovation and adaptation.

School-to-school learning

Networked schools are enthusiastic to learn from and with each other. They know they will create and share more knowledge working together than in isolation. All kinds of schools are involved and this diversity is supporting the development of dynamic new learning partnerships.

Network-to-Network learning

As Networks develop local, context-specific solutions to the problems they face, the National College for School Leadership will spread learning between Networks and beyond the programme, thus contributing knowledge and understanding across the whole education system.

Communities

– learning on behalf of each other

07

In Networked Learning Communities, schools and teachers will create and exchange knowledge collaboratively, continuously and systematically. By ensuring that adults learn, that schools learn, and that schools learn from one another, we can help all children to become powerful learners.

The desire to learn on behalf of each other represents the moral purpose at the heart of every Networked Learning Community.

Embedded networking activity supports the development of innovative 'learning links' within and between schools. Networked schools care about, and are committed to, the success of teachers and children in other schools. Teachers within Networks are interested not only in improving their own teaching, but in helping others to improve theirs. NLCs allow teachers and schools to learn with and for each other, to pass on their knowledge so that others can adapt it for their own context. This shared learning directly improves performance across the entire Network.

Networked Learning Communities are motivated and bound together by the desire to improve all our schools and the lives of all the young people who travel through them.



“If all the headteachers were talking together they could talk about how they have tried to improve the school life and then other headteachers could try as well. They could share improvements and with things that don’t work as good, the other schools would know not to try it.”

Oliver, Year 10, Bolton

“You learn different things (from other kids) – they educate you in a way – and you’ve got more experience of other children being around you so when you go to a bigger school it’s not as frightening.”

Jourdane, Year 6, London

Networked Learning Communities in action

10

From, At and Around London

Laurian Adams, from Queen's Park Community School in London, says it was serendipity that she heard about Networked Learning Communities at a seminar. "We already had a lot of informal local links through a variety of existing projects, but nothing was formalised. It was a bit like a spider's web but there was nothing that involved all of us. The NLC brings everything into focus and gives it a structure," said Laurian.

Now Queen's Park and other local schools, in partnership with the School of Lifelong Learning and Education at Middlesex University and Excellence in Cities in Brent, are working closely together. They are focusing on 'learning from the learner', finding out how students want to learn, evaluating their needs and building a resource bank for use across the entire Network.

"We tend to teach the way we were taught, but in this, one of London's most disadvantaged inner-city wards, it's very important that we listen to what the learners need and how they want to be taught," believes Laurian.

Small Schools Managing Improvement Group Shropshire

Eight small rural schools in Shropshire are using the Networked Learning Communities initiative to take forward collaborative working around common problems. "We're similar schools with the same sorts of issues and we find it very useful to meet together," said Sue Jenkins, head of St Peter's Primary School at Edgmond. "We act as a mutual support group and we're clearly committed to working together. As a Networked Learning Community, we want to move forward and be more innovative.

"We need to support teachers to do their own research and development.

"The results have the potential to effect change across all the schools in the Network. Subject co-ordinators have already come together to share problems and practice. It can be very lonely for a reception teacher on their own in a small school – making contact with others in the same area is a real bonus."



Contact us

Networked Learning Communities Information Line

08707 870 370

E: nlc@ncsl.org.uk

www.ncsl.org.uk/nlc

If you would like a copy of the Networked Learning Communities 2002 video, please contact us.

Learn about your local Networked Learning Community
by contacting:

