

“Over the years of reform efforts, the bottom-up/top-down controversy for educational reform has been resolved; it has become clear that a strategy which blends the two approaches promises the best results. One widely shared reform principle is the necessarily collaborative nature of school reform work.”

The Promise of Partnership for Promoting Reform

Anna Ershler Richert, Pamela Stoddard
and Michael Kass

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Quote ref. 003/SS/NLC

The Bay Area Schools Reform Collaborative's (BASRC) School-University Partnership (SUP) has sought to optimise learning at all levels through establishing collaborative partnerships across institutional boundaries. In this paper, the authors outline the theory behind their initiative, describe the partnerships in practice and finally, discuss the outcomes.

The Networked Learning Communities initiative has been informed by and is connected with BASRC, and we have a lot to learn from their work. If you are interested in gaining an international perspective on collaboration as a route to educational reform, this is excellent reading. The insights into partnership working with non-school partners are also invaluable.

Michael Kass is director of the Teacher Quality Collaboratory of the 21st Century Education Initiative at Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network. He is on loan from the Paolo Alto Unified School District, where he has served as an elementary school principal, kindergarten teacher, and high school teacher of theatre.

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Anna Ershler Richert is Professor of Education at Mills College in Oakland, California, where she co-directs the Teachers for Tomorrow's Schools Credential and MA programmes. Her current research occurs at the intersection of teacher learning and school reform.

Pamela Stoddard is Research and Evaluation Manager for BASRC, where she is engaged in research and evaluation in the areas of school/university partnerships, reform leadership, and district support for school change.

“One of the distinctive features of successful networks is dedicated facilitation...In preparation for the Networked Learning Communities (NLC) programme, NCSL has been conducting research amongst leaders of existing networks in education to find out how they have interpreted this role. What has emerged is an understanding of the key issues facing network leaders, some ideas about how the programme might support them and an appreciation of the complexity and importance of their role in NLCs.”

What Does a Network Leader Do?
Julie Temperley

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Quote ref. 004/SS/NLC

This short document, originally distributed at the 2002 NLC Launch Conference, is structured around a series of 'big issues' which, although they may not arise immediately after the launch of a network, are likely to become relevant for network co-leaders. The big issues include communication, knowledge and relationships. In addition to providing an analysis of these themes, the publication also poses reflective questions and offers possible starting points and examples of practice.

Based on the experiences of network leaders involved with other initiatives, this is essential reading for all co-leaders, no matter what their experience. Use it in the early stages of your network's development to help frame your approach to network leadership.

Julie Temperley, who undertook this research and compiled the publication, has worked to facilitate and promote teacher and student research in all phases of education, including schools and post-compulsory. She is currently Co-leader of the Learning Exchange with the Networked Learning Communities programme.

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“The kind of sharing that goes on in educational networks often has the effect of dignifying and giving shape to the process and content of educators’ experiences, the daily-ness of their work, which is often invisible to outsiders, yet binds insiders together.

“Networks are becoming very popular, in part, because they encourage and seem to support many of the key ideas that reformers say are needed to produce change and improvement in schools, teaching, and learning.”

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995, McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993, Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1993

Networks

Ann Lieberman

This paper looks at how the field of educational networks has developed by comparing a study carried out in the late 1970s (Allen Parker) with one almost 20 years later (Lieberman and Grolnick, 1996). It outlines some of the main characteristics of networks, both then and now, and encourages reflection upon, and implementation of, such features.

This is a short and extremely accessible article, which outlines ideas and values that are compatible and consistent with the Networked Learning Communities programme. For NLCs embarking on truly collaborative work with new partners and schools, it provides a useful basis or rationale for working within networks and for analysing the key challenges involved.

Ann Lieberman is a senior scholar with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and a visiting professor at Stanford University.

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“The aim of this exercise is to produce lots of discussion and to facilitate the sharing and agreeing of a common set of ideas about learning in your school in a short space of time.”

Diamond 9

Adapted by Matthew Horne

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Quote ref. 012/SS/NLC

The *Diamond 9* exercise is a workshop tool designed to help a group of participants collectively prioritise a long list of issues, items or questions. It is a really effective way of producing a short list of priorities or areas for collaborative development to which everyone involved has contributed. The exercise is also an excellent way of facilitating conversations between staff who may rarely discuss such issues with one another.

In this version of the exercise, the list of ideas to be prioritised is a set of questions developed by NCSL and Demos that arose from a literature review designed to help those establishing and running Networked Learning Communities. A version of this workshop was used at the launch of the NLC programme in June 2002. Now that your networks are underway, you may wish to undertake *Diamond 9* in workshop sessions with more key members of your networked schools as you encourage shared ownership of key issues and priorities. Obviously, you can use the questions provided, or take some time to generate your own.

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Matthew Horne is a researcher with Demos and is currently seconded part-time to the Networked Learning Group of NCSL.

“Regardless of how networks, coalitions, or partnerships begin, they all seem to have to negotiate a set of tensions that keep them going.”

Ann Lieberman, Journal of Staff Development, Summer 1999
(Vol. 20, No 3)

Understanding NLCs – An Activity
Adapted by Kate Bond

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Quote ref. 028/SS/NLC

This activity has been designed to support Networked Learning Communities at an early stage of their development. Participants will be able to discuss and develop a shared vision for their network in addition to developing an understanding of networked learning.

It is appropriate for all adults within your network, and some aspects may even be appropriate for pupils, depending on age, ability and the extent to which you wish to engage pupils in developing the vision for your NLC.

Kate Bond is a network facilitator with the Networked Learning Group.

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‘There are now 110 Networked Learning Communities across England. The programme’s 1st Annual Conference, held on 26 and 27 June 2003, provided opportunities for members of networks and others to experience, first-hand, the real work taking place within Networked Learning Communities across the country.’

1st Annual Conference, 2003 Video
Video

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This video gives a taste of what 'networked learning' looks like. It includes contributions from four Networked Learning Communities, all undertaking different types of collaborative learning activity within and across schools. Also included is footage from the conference itself, and feedback about the days' activities from delegates. We hope this video will be a helpful resource for members of existing networks and those who are not directly involved in a network, but would like to find out more.

Within a network, you could show this video to raise awareness of networked learning across the network or with an even wider audience. It could be a useful stimulus for discussion of current network activity and progress within a smaller group of teachers or headteachers. However you use the video, we hope that it is viewed in the spirit in which it was made – as a tool for generating network-to-network learning and sharing just some of the remarkable work being undertaken in Networked Learning Communities.

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