

Networked Learning Communities

learning from each other

learning with each other

learning on behalf of each other

DEVELOPMENT AND ENQUIRY PROGRAMMES TRANSFORMING LEARNING FOR NETWORKS

Transforming Learning

Hay McBer

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Transforming Learning (Hay McBer) was designed as a private, self-directed professional development tool. Experience has shown, however, that it is most powerful when used collaboratively, with staff coaching each other, comparing results and formulating joint action plans. This project prepares participants for receiving, handling and using the data as an integral part of the process, and seeks to build on the collaborative aspects to generate a powerful networked learning tool.

Participants will focus their enquiry between gathering the data and climate change in order to better understand the benefits of networked learning. It is hoped that the project will generate powerful practical and theoretical models for use within the wider educational community. The second level, the Action Observer Group, will be clusters of schools within networks who will also have access to the software, but whose role will be to test hypothesis generated by the Core Groups as well as generating their own models of working. For both groups, the work is designed to be developmental. Networks will have the opportunity to contribute to the redesign of the software to generate a powerful networked learning tool. They may also choose to adapt the questions used by the software to better understand the impact of the pedagogies their network is enquiring into.

Activity

Core groups

There are now five Core Groups who each began their development and enquiry activity after October half-term. The focus of each of these groups is identified on forthcoming pages of this booklet. In each of these networks all schools are engaged in the project .

Action observer groups

These networks should identify which aspect of Core Group activity you would find it beneficial to action observe (networks who have interests in other areas should contact julie.mcgrane@ncsl.org.uk to discuss this further). Once you have identified a minimum of three networked learning community schools, you should email jo.bryce@ncsl.org.uk for a submission form. These should be emailed to the same address by 4 December 2003. You will be notified by 15 December 2003 of the status of your submission.

Core network activity

- Leadership development
- Examining alternative models for sharing Transforming Learning data, to identify those that are effective in lowering existing emotional and psychological barriers
- Pupil voice
- Understanding differences in classroom climate and investigating the impact this knowledge can have on network development
- Transition

Leadership development

Hartlepool Networked Learning Community

As Transforming Learning has been a focus for this network in its first year, there is already considerable use of the classroom climate strand. For the purpose of this development and enquiry project, all teachers will engage with the survey again. Headteachers will then analyse network aggregate data, in order to identify three key issues for classroom climate development. Once these areas have been shared, each school will identify teacher leaders (based on strengths identified through Transforming Learning in these areas) who through a process of discussion groups, paired work, enquiry and reflection will seek to investigate the elements of their practice which leads to their strengths in these areas.

Once these teacher leaders have made their effective practice explicit, a focus on leadership will emerge. In addition to training these teacher leaders to support schools with declared issues, the network will seek to investigate what makes effective leaders of learning. Do effective classroom teachers, for example, make effective leaders of learning?

By the end of the development and enquiry project all teachers will undertake a second round of Transforming Learning, in order to evaluate impact.

Examples of potential activity for Action Observer Groups

- What makes effective leaders of learning?
- What impact can highly effective practitioners have on other classroom or school climates?
- What teacher behaviours or classroom processes characterise particular strengths in classroom climate?

Examining alternative models for sharing Transforming Learning data, to identify those that are effective in lowering existing emotional and psychological barriers.

North Leeds Networked Learning Community

We know Transforming Learning data to be more powerful as a lever for school improvement if it is shared, even though this is emotionally challenging for all those involved. This is a particularly significant development and enquiry project, as the learning generated here will have relevance to all other enquiries. We know that data handling and feedback can be a very difficult process for some, this project will endeavour to investigate alternative feedback models and make explicit their benefits and constraints.

A pilot group in each school of three to five teachers (post NQT but pre-threshold) will use Transforming Learning to collect student perception data. Staff will investigate different models for sharing data before selecting one method which will have the most impact in their own organisation on encouraging self-directed change in teacher behaviours.

The different models for sharing data used in each partner organisation will be developed initially school-wide and then school-to-school through the network, using a series of twilight workshops. These collaborative opportunities will allow all participants to focus on the processes that generate different data outcomes, ultimately leading to specific guidance to all organisations regarding the advantages and disadvantages of particular feedback models. The pilot group will then undertake coaching and facilitator roles to subsequent groups as we move to scale.

Pupil learning will benefit as staff will become more sensitive to the students' voice and more reflective in their professional practice, recognising their own role as learners.

Adult learners will become confident in the role of leaders of learning through the leadership opportunities they experience as they share their outcomes with peers in their own schools, across the network and through network-to-network learning.

Examples of potential activity for Action Observer Groups

- How can we support colleagues in handling feedback so that it helps them to develop their practice?
- What are the costs and benefits of alternative feedback models?
- Are there benefits of collaboration when handling data or is it more powerful to analyse practice alone?

Pupil voice

Transforming Learning Networked Learning Community

Our focus is the use of Pupil voice as a key component of improving classroom climate. At least one school in the network already does this and we will begin by sharing their good practice with all schools in the network. Small groups of teachers in each school will then volunteer to work on this strand through collaborative work and enquiry between teachers and pupils. Outcome and process learning will also be shared with the network's other strands of activity to investigate the significance of findings for team leaders, school teams and whole school.

Teachers and students will select a particular dimension of classroom climate and together plan strategies to develop it. Pupils will visit one of the schools in our NLC and one in a neighbouring NLC to learn from pupils who are already engaged in Pupil voice. One possibility is that each school enquires into one dimension of classroom climate and shares processes and findings with the whole group. Each school will identify staff and pupils who will begin in November and other groups will begin at three monthly intervals. As part of our commitment to pupil participation in this development and enquiry work, one of our three co-ordinators for this project will be a pupil from a network school.

This development and enquiry project makes connections with the Pupil Involvement in Teaching and Learning development and enquiry group, so interest from participants in this project would be welcomed.

Examples of potential activity for Action Observer Groups

- What role can pupils play in understanding what constitutes effective classroom climate?
- What role can pupils play in co-ordinating enquiry activity?

Understanding differences in classroom climate and investigating the impact this knowledge can have on network development.

North of England Cluster of Schools

The activity of this cluster of networked learning communities is focused on transforming four areas of practice (Leadership, Learning, Structures and Inclusion). This development and enquiry project is designed to contribute to learning more about this process. Activity for this project is focused on exploring and understanding the differences between classrooms and later schools through a process of teacher and pupil enquiry.

The network plans first to investigate what differences exist between classrooms, using the classroom climate software. Second, through enquiry, they will seek to understand why these differences exist. Third, the network hopes to understand how the perceived strengths of the schools in each of their four network groups are evidenced in the climate data. Not only will this provide them with greater understanding of particular areas of strength, but will enable them to plan a development programme using evidence informed network expertise and experience to facilitate network learning.

Examples of potential activity for Action Observer Groups

- What contributes to differences in classroom climate in schools and between schools?
- Does classroom and school climate data help evidence schools' strengths?
- How can climate data inform network development?

Transition

Tweedmouth Networked Learning Community

The Tweedmouth NLC is committed to raising the performance (levels of attainment) of its pupils. To do that, it recognises that there is a very significant correlation between motivation and attitude, and pupil performance.

The main focus of our research will be on whether there is any correlation between classroom climate and the levels of attainment across the three phases of education.

We will also be investigating whether Philosophy for Children and other Thinking Skills training and practice, such as Accelerated Learning, impact on classroom climate. Taken together, we will, therefore, be investigating the impact of Thinking Skills on the levels of attainment achieved across the three phases of education to be found in the Tweedmouth NLC.

By isolating the areas of classroom climate that appear to have a significant impact on levels of attainment we will be able to affect change within the network to raise the levels of attainment across the three phases.

We will focus, initially, on the humanities and the impact of Accelerated Learning on that area of the curriculum, which is the main focus of our networked learning community. The lead learners in the schools involved will work together collaboratively to infuse the strengths of our practice into teaching throughout the network.

We can learn on behalf of all, because all ages from 3-18 are represented in our network. Transforming Learning will be a tool to develop our work on transition across the phases, the major part of our work as a networked learning community.

Examples of potential activity for Action Observer Groups

- How does classroom climate differ across each phase of education and how should this inform transition planning?
- What impact does Thinking Skills or Assessment for Learning have on climate?
- Which aspects of classroom climate have greatest impact on attainment?

Transforming learning guidance

This advice was given to core networks to help them plan their activity for the development and enquiry activity. We would suggest that ‘preparing the ground’ would still be relevant to your early activity.

Privacy issues

It is important that colleagues who volunteer to participate in this project are clear about who will have access to their data. Although no one other than the individual staff member has access to personal data, it is essential that they commit to involvement and be clear that they will be required to share some of their findings with colleagues, in order for them to work together. In addition, anonymised data will be available to team leaders, headteachers, Hay McBer and NCSL.

Preparing the ground (January 2004)

Transforming Learning was designed as a private, self-directed professional development tool. Experience has shown, however, that it is most powerful when used collaboratively, with staff coaching each other, comparing results and formulating joint action plans. This project prepares participants for receiving, handling and using the data as an integral part of the process, and seeks to build on the collaborative aspects to generate a powerful networked learning tool. In view of the implications of the findings for the whole school, we also recommend you give thought to how data and subsequent learning can be shared, compared, discussed and acted upon across your school/ networked learning community.

Requests and recommendations

Co-ordination

- We require that two co-ordinators are appointed by the co-leaders/Strategic Leadership Team on behalf of your network. We request that they are both from different schools and suggest that, where possible, they are not in the same schools as the co-leaders, in order to promote reach and to help build capacity.
- At least one of the co-ordinators should represent this work on the NLC strategic team/steering group.
- They should have access to the headteachers in participating schools. In order to maximise potential impact, move to scale, build capacity and facilitate learning it is important that the co-ordinators have direct access to headteachers.
- Before submitting to become an Action Observer Group the two co-ordinators should collaborate with the Strategic Leadership Team to ensure that they feel ownership of the work and that the network takes responsibility for the focus rather than it being the design of a co-leader. We would anticipate that this sort of joint planning and shared work (characteristic of networked learning communities) would be generative of collaboration during the data handling phase.

Working with schools

- The network will have to be sure that each school has enough volunteers (and could include them in the process of designing the focus).
- To be an Action Observer Group you should have a minimum of three schools collaborating on this project. In each school we would expect five teachers to begin the work, but that number should grow significantly by the end of the year. You should also plan how to create enough time for meeting together, and decide the times of year that more frequent meetings will be necessary.
- The co-ordinators will need to be able to influence cover and NLC financial allocation.

Co-ordinators of Action Observer Groups should be available for a Transforming Learning event on 4 February 2004.

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