

Understanding NLCs – an activity

(page 2 of 2)

Background to the national programme

The facilitator of the session describes the aims and objectives of the national programme, learning from, with and on behalf of others referring, where necessary, to PowerPoint presentations from national conferences, the launch or annual conference videos, leaflets and other resources – **5 to 15 minutes as required.**

Consider the question – what is the difference between networking and networked learning? – **10 minutes.**

Other questions to stimulate this discussion.

- Is a meeting between maths co-ordinators from ten schools networking or networked learning?
- When do you have opportunities to learn from, with and on behalf of others?
- When was the last time you learnt something which changed your professional practice? What did you learn and how did you learn it?

Building the vision for your NLC

Collectively consider what your NLC will look like in practice. How will you work together to create opportunities to learn from, with and on behalf of others in your NLC?

Set up flip-charts around the room with one of the following phrases on each:

All pupils in our NLC will have opportunities to...

All teachers in our NLC will have opportunities to...

All headteachers in our NLC will have opportunities to...

These three phrases are essential, you may wish to add others according to the intended outcomes of the activity.

Each group sits by a question and all participants should question each other in a collective search for real examples of activities which will promote networked learning – **15 minutes.**

One member of each group (the 'spokesperson') should remain with their flip-chart while the others move around the room to the next one. The spokespersons can then recap the discussion to their new colleagues before resuming, with new ideas and suggestions being added to the flip-chart – **10 minutes.**

If you wish the groups could rotate for a third time.

Action planning

Bring discussions to a close and provide a brief opportunity to plenary the session.

Explain how ideas will be taken forward and how everyone can become actively involved in the NLC – **10 minutes.**

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www.ncsl.org.uk/nlc

National College for School Leadership
Networked Learning Group
Derwent House
Cranfield University Technology Park
University Way, Cranfield
Bedfordshire MK43 0AZ

T: 08707 870 370
F: 0115 872 2401
E: nlc@ncsl.org.uk

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(page 1 of 2)

Introduction

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

Why should we do this activity?

By engaging in this activity participants will:

- develop their understanding of what it means to belong to an NLC
- be able to contribute to the vision of their NLC
- build their understanding and ownership of the network
- consider what networked learning could look like in practice in their NLC
- learn from and with colleagues, by discussing and developing ideas together.

Who should be involved?

This activity is appropriate for all adults within your NLC. Some aspects of the activity 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. Ideally participants will be from different schools within your network, and all schools will be represented by several participants. This activity could be carried out as part of your launch conference or as part of a network-wide INSET. It could be carried at your network-wide headteacher meetings, or your network-wide teacher/co-ordinator meetings. Each school could then engage in the activity as a whole school. You should decide on the best approach for involving colleagues within your network.

How many participants can be involved?

This activity is most appropriate for a minimum of six participants. There is no maximum number. However, when there are a considerable number of participants, each discussion group should have no more than eight participants to ensure that everyone is able to contribute to the discussion. If several discussion groups are undertaking the activity at the same time, groups should be given opportunities at the end to share their ideas with colleagues. Here are some examples.

- Each group could record the main points of their discussion on a flip-chart. At the end of the discussion colleagues could have time to read and note any additional ideas on the flip-charts.
- Each group could give verbal feedback highlighting the three main points of their discussion and/or highlighting a problem/issue for further consideration.
- One member of each group could move to a different group and provide a summary of the points discussed.
- One or two people could be given the role of listening to all the discussions, moving freely between groups. At the end of the main discussion, these colleagues could feedback their impressions of the discussions in a plenary.

There are many different techniques you could use. Choose the ones you feel most comfortable with, which enable all participants to be involved and to have an opportunity to contribute.

Who should facilitate this activity?

Anyone can facilitate this activity. It could be:

- a co-leader
- a network-to-network consultant
- a HEI consultant or LEA officer
- a headteacher from within your network
- your NLC facilitator
- a colleague from outside your network.

Ideally your facilitator for the activity will have a good understanding of the activity (eg they may have participated in the activity already) and they will be respected by the audience. They will also be skilled at facilitating adult learning and in asking appropriate questions. Co-leaders might facilitate this activity at a network-wide event. Headteachers might facilitate this activity within their own schools, or in pairs with heads from another school. You should make the most appropriate choice for each situation.

How long will the activity take?

The activity has been designed to last for approximately 90 minutes. A detailed indication of timings is included in the activity guidance.

What resources are required?

Each discussion group will need large flip-chart paper and three different coloured marker pens. A range of other NLC resources could be used to complement this activity:

- the NLC launch video
- the NLC values and beliefs leaflet
- the levels of learning survey
- the Mystery game
- the Diamond 9 activity.

For further information and guidance on other resources and activities available to support your network please visit www.ncsl.org.uk/nlc, telephone 08707 870 370 or email nlc@ncsl.org.uk. Alternatively, you may wish to discuss this in more detail with your facilitator.

Introduction

Introduce participants and aims of activity, and split into groups of six to eight (preferably with colleagues from different schools) – **10 minutes.**

1. Defining

Community

Individual discussion groups nominate a chair and a scribe. The scribe writes 'community' in the middle of the flip-chart, which will prompt a discussion around everyone's understanding of what a community is. The scribe should record the ideas in the same colour on the flip-chart – **10 minutes.**

Useful questions to stimulate discussion.

- What does it mean to belong to a community?
- What makes a community? What are its values? How does it function?
- What counts as being a member of a community? What makes you feel that you are part of a community?

2. Defining

Learning Community

The scribe adds the word 'learning' above the word 'community' in the middle of the flip-chart, using a different coloured pen. The group should now discuss their understanding of what a 'learning community' is, and the scribe should record their discussion using the same coloured pen – **8 minutes.**

Useful questions to stimulate discussion.

- What are the differences between a 'community' and a 'learning community'?
- How do members of a learning community behave?

3. Defining

Networked Learning Community

The scribe adds the word 'networked' above 'learning community' in the middle of the flip-chart, using a third coloured pen. The group should now discuss what a 'networked learning community' means to them, and the scribe should record their ideas on the flip-chart using the same coloured pen – **6 minutes.**

Useful questions to stimulate discussion.

- What does 'networked' mean to you?
- What difference does it make if your community is networked?

Plenary

Bring discussions to a close and allow participants to see/hear from other discussion groups – **5 minutes.**

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