

THE WEST PARTNERSHIP CREATION OF A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING NETWORK

June 2019

1. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

i Why do we want to build a Collaborative Learning Network across the West Partnership?

1. The International Context

Extensive national and international experience and research evidence demonstrates that collaboration is crucial for systemic improvement and educational equity. In particular, collaborative improvement strategies involving school-to-school networking and cross authority partnership can work as levers of innovation and system improvement. (Fullan 2013, Chapman, C., Muijs, D., Reynolds, D., Sammons, P. and Teddlie C. 2015; Chapman, C and Hadfield, M 2010; Donaldson 2012; Ainscow et al., 2012; Harrison, C. Hofstein, A. Eylon, B.S. & Simon, S. 2008).

The overarching aim of our education system is to reduce inequality of outcomes and raise attainment. Research tells us that when collaboration is evidence-based and focused on improving learning and teaching it is a very effective way to achieve these aims. Collaborative learning projects have proven to improve learning and teaching and build leadership capacity. The West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network's design is informed by this research with the aim of creating a sustainable network that will promote high quality collaboration that makes a positive difference to professional learning and improves learner outcomes.

2. The National Context

The International Council of Education Advisers (ICEA) Report 2016 – 18 sets out the case for embedding the change and transformation of reform which is currently underway in Scottish Education. While a focus on leadership, pedagogy, and collaboration are already significant strengths within the current education policy framework, ICEA seeks further "emphasis placed on capacity building, the focus on leadership, pedagogy and collaboration" which "should lead to real improvements at school and system level." To shift the ownership of change it recommends "three key policy imperatives that will help to create a self-improving system: professional empowerment, responsibility, and ownership." The West Partnership's work on building collaborative networks will contribute to the implementation of ICEA's recommendations and will bring about the sustained improvement.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) sets out a number of standards for the profession and the West Partnership's approach to collaborative learning networks will contribute to building the capacity of its teaching professionals. Most relevant standards include:

Professional Commitment:

- *Engaging with all aspects of professional practice and working collegiately with all members of our educational communities with enthusiasm, adaptability and constructive criticality;*
- *Committing to lifelong enquiry, learning, professional development and leadership as core aspects of professionalism and collaborative practice;*

Professional values and personal commitment expected of all in the teaching profession:

- *Engaging with all aspects of professional practice and working collegiately with all members of our educational communities with enthusiasm, adaptability and constructive criticality.*
- *Committing to lifelong enquiry, learning, professional development and leadership as core aspects of professionalism and collaborative practice.*

Professional knowledge and understanding of successful leaders:

- *Engage critically with knowledge and understanding of research and developments in teaching and learning and work with others to ensure the application of relevant development to improving outcomes for learners.*

The Scottish Government is clear that the national aspiration to deliver excellence and equity requires empowered educators. The Education Governance Review (Scottish Government, 2017) identifies the responsibility of staff at all levels to make decisions that will lead to improvement in learning in the classrooms. "An empowered system is one that grows stronger and more confident, working in partnership to lead learning and teaching that achieves excellence and equity for all learners. Empowerment and collaboration for improvement happens at all levels in an empowered system." (National Improvement Hub 2019.) The West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network promotes empowerment at all levels with a focus on learning and teaching and the development of leadership skills.

3. Vision

The West Partnership's vision is captured by Equity, Excellence and Empowerment which underpins all our work. Our vision and values are to "facilitate collaboration which will promote, allow and scaffold learning and challenges partners". To realise these we have set an ambitious target for all schools and early learning and childcare (ELC) settings in the West Partnership to be involved in collaborative learning by 2025. Many schools in the region are already collaborating within local authorities and some beyond their boundaries and we would wish to acknowledge such, but our offer is as suggested by our vision and values, i.e. the facilitation of collaborative practices across the West Partnership.

To ensure that the central focus remains on improving learning and teaching and outcomes for young people the West Partnership has defined collaboration as **“working together to understand and improve pedagogy for agreed purposes, which leads to better outcomes, informed by evidence and critical self-reflection”**. These values will be core to the aims of a West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network.

In partnership with the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change, the Collaborative Learning workstream has identified from research and practice the core principles and key characteristics that are more likely to lead to high quality and sustainable collaboration that leads to positive outcomes for learners:

Core principles:

- Collaboration is promoted across schools and local authorities, with a clear focus on equity, excellence and empowerment.
- Collaborative learning approaches are embedded within school and local improvement planning.
- Collaborative action research and evidence are used to identify key challenges, experiment with innovative practices and monitor improvements.
- Mutual benefit to all involved, underpins planning and implementation.
- Planning encompasses arrangements to support long-term sustainability and new approaches to capacity building.
- Leadership opportunities are created and embraced, alongside the professional learning of staff at all levels.

Key characteristics of successful collaboration

- Shared relentless focus on improving learning experiences, teaching and assessment to raise attainment and achievement and narrow the poverty-related attainment gap.
- Development of approaches that are both tailored and context specific.
- Locally owned by all educators and led with a clear commitment to ensure and equip empowered leaders at all levels.
- Promotion of a risk-taking courageous culture that allows a high level of autonomy within a framework of accountability.
- Investment in time and space to build positive relationships, improve the quality of professional dialogue and build the supporting infrastructure.
- Meaningful use of a wide range of data and evidence to inform practice and understand the impact of approaches such as Collaborative Action Research, Lesson Study, Learning Rounds and Improvement Science.
- Opportunities for schools to look outwards and own their common challenges.
- Engagement with diverse range of partners and expertise including schools, local authorities, universities, Education Scotland and other agencies such as colleges, community and learning development, health, third sector and employability services.
- Building capacity and expertise in working with and empowering families and communities to actively participate in measures to promote better learning.

2. PURPOSE AND AIMS

i What difference will the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network make?

The West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network aims to build upon good practice in collaborative working to embed robust processes that will lead to high quality and sustainable collaborative practice informed by evidence. The West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network will offer schools and practitioners the opportunity to look outwards and across boundaries to learn from one another. At the heart of the Collaborative Learning Network is the spirit that “the expertise is in the room” and this will underpin our work, thereby empowering educators at all levels to effect positive change.

The core purpose of the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network will be to::

1. nurture high level collaboration by empowering educators at all levels through a process that promotes the key characteristics of effective collaboration;
2. develop sustainable systems ,scaffolded by the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network; and
3. build leadership capacity to take forward improvements through collaboration. in effective collaborative working

The aims of the Collaborative Learning network will build over time to:

1. increase the participation of practitioners in high quality collaborative learning activities;
2. increase the number of practitioners confident in using enquiry skills to measure and understand the impact of interventions;
3. develop a critical mass of practitioners, at all levels, who can promote high quality collaborative methods within and across schools;
4. create a sustainable model that supports high quality collaborative methods across schools; and
5. create a culture of empowerment at all levels that promotes collective responsibility in delivering equity and excellence for all children and young people.
6. grow the capacity of the system to bring about improvements in learning experiences and outcomes for children and young people with the aim of training the majority of practitioners in collaborative processes by 2025

To achieve these aims the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network will initially.

1. develop a system to match educational establishments with common needs and interests into collaborative learning teams.
2. develop a scaffold of key facilitators to support collaborative learning teams
3. develop a professional learning programme to enhance enquiry skills that support the key features of effective collaborative learning.
4. develop a collaborative network for facilitators to support and promote collaborative learning.
5. develop a platform for sharing learning across the West Partnership
6. build capacity in leaders to use collaborative processes to bring about improvement within and across schools

3. THE PROCESS

i What would the Collaborative Learning Network look like?

The West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network will promote a flexible approach that encourages a wide range of collaborative activities that suit the context and experience of the schools and participants. Activities will adhere to the principles and characteristics of effective collaboration. To ensure high quality collaborative activity, the design of the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network will, therefore, be based on the following key features derived from the key characteristics of effective collaborative learning:

1. The collaboration will be strategically led and locally owned by practitioners.
2. The focus for collaboration will be evidence based and outcome focused.
3. Collaborative planning learning, teaching, assessment and moderation will be integral to the collaborative process.
4. Impact will be evaluated using qualitative data, quantitative data and direct observation.
5. Learning will be shared across the West Partnership Collaborative Network.
6. Learning will be up-scaled and embedded in policy and practice.

Summary of the process

On an annual basis two new Collaborative Learning Networks will be launched. Each new cohort would be made up from a minimum of 40 Early Learning and Childcare settings or schools from across the region. At least two sectors will be represented for each cohort. Each authority will provide one key facilitator for up to 10 schools that participate. To promote the partnership between strategic leadership and teacher empowerment each school nominated will propose one promoted member of staff and one practitioner. Each establishment will collaborate with other educational establishments to implement a Collaborative Learning Project. Every cohort would involve a maximum of 100 participants who will be matched into eight collaborative learning teams.

The West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network will support the collaborative learning teams by

- 1. matching the educational establishments with common interests through an initial intelligence gathering survey followed by a face to face matching event.*
- 2. providing professional learning events to deepen practitioners' understanding of professional enquiry.*
- 3. providing key facilitators to nurture each collaborative learning team.*
- 4. celebrating success through a final sharing event.*

Professional Learning Programme

Each participant will commit to the following professional learning activities:

Timescale		Core Events	Purpose
Cohort A	Cohort B		
May	October	<u>Launch</u> With invited speakers including academics and practitioners who can share experiences.	To share a common understanding of the aims of a Collaborative Learning Network To share the expectations of being involved in a Collaborative Learning Network
May	October	<u>Digital Survey</u> will be sent out to be completed by all establishments involved to gather information about interests to help match schools	To find out where common interests lie to match schools
June	November	<u>Collaborative Networking Educational Establishments Matching Event</u>	To match educational establishments into Collaborative Learning Teams To investigate developing a hunch into an enquiry question
Aug	November	<u>Professional Learning Event</u> Building an enquiry question	To be supported in developing a quality enquiry question
Sept	December	<u>Professional Learning Event</u> Measuring Impact	To learn about and share different ways of measuring data - quantitative and qualitative data To draw up a Data Collection Plan
Jan	March	<u>Professional Learning Event</u> Direct Observation Strategies	To learn about how to implement direct observation strategies such as Lesson Study
May	October	<u>Final Event</u> Sharing Event	To share experiences, lessons learned and impact of interventions

We will seek endorsement from SCEL for the Collaborative Learning Network Professional Learning Programme.

Participants will also commit to attending a minimum of five collaborative meetings supported by their allocated key facilitator

Support meetings - led by key facilitator
To finalise the enquiry question
To finalise the data/ evidence collection plan
To plan the change to teaching practice
To plan direct observation activity
To prepare for the Sharing Event

At the final event participants will informally share their learning and findings. Key facilitators will support Collaborative Learning Teams to share learning, where appropriate.

4. PARTNERSHIPS

To enhance the professional learning programme the West Partnership has identified partners that can share their expertise and experience:

a) *The Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change*

The Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change will support the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network by:

1. Providing a representative from the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change to attend the Key Facilitator Planning Meetings and Collaborative Learning Workstream Steering Group Meetings
2. Providing support for the professional learning programme as agreed at Key Facilitator planning meetings
3. Providing specialist evidence-based and strategic advice on structures and processes associated with building effective partnerships and networks

b) *The West Partnership Principal Educational Psychologist Team*

The West Partnership Principal Educational Psychologist Team will support the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network by:

1. Providing an Educational Psychologist "buddy" for the Key Facilitator linked to their Local Authority to provide support and advice
2. Providing a representative Educational Psychologist to attend Key Facilitator Planning Meetings
3. Providing support for the professional learning programme as agreed at Key Facilitator Planning Meetings

c) Education Scotland (awaiting confirmation from Education Scotland)
Education Scotland will support the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network by:

1. Providing a representative from Education Scotland to attend the Key Facilitator Planning Meetings and Collaborative Learning Workstream Steering Group Meetings
2. Delivering aspects of the professional learning programme as agreed at Key Facilitator planning meetings
3. Providing specialist evidence-informed and strategic advice on structures and processes associated with building effective partnerships and networks
4. Providing bespoke support for key facilitators, such as up to date research evidence based research advice, as agreed at planning meetings

Where further support is identified the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network will invite representatives to join the Key Facilitator Planning Team

5. RESOURCES

The West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network will work in partnership with other bodies such as SCEL, universities and colleges and the GTC to provide streamlined links to published research.

The West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network will develop digital systems to share and communicate information across educational establishments.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

i **How will the model be sustainable? How can we mitigate the risks for failure?**

To ensure that the West Partnership Collaborative Network achieves its intended impact it will be important to adopt a sustainable model that has safeguards in place to promote high quality collaborative practice. To do so it will be vital to include the following core elements:

A. A network of key facilitators

Experience tells us that without key “drivers” Collaborative Learning Projects can lose momentum and ultimately disband. To prevent this outcome the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network will be supported by a team of key facilitators. The key facilitators will be experienced in leading collaborative learning and will work together to support and scaffold the network including supporting allocated Collaborative Learning Teams. Each Local Authority would be expected to provide one Key Facilitator for up to 10 educational establishments they nominate to join a cohort.

Identifying new key facilitators for each new cohort will be a crucial part of the process and failure to do so creates a significant risk to the success of the network. A core purpose of a Collaborative Learning Network will be to grow leadership capacity. With this value at the heart of collaborative learning and the belief that the “expertise is in the room”, the

aim will be for the recruitment of key facilitators to be self-sustaining. Key facilitators will be identified on an annual basis from participants who have enhanced their expertise and leadership skills through their involvement in a previous Collaborative Learning Network cohort. Each cohort will be launched when a new team of eight key facilitators is established.

B. A critical number of establishments involved

At the core of collaborative learning is the practical need for educational establishment to work with partners with common interests. To ensure that each cohort offers the appropriate diversity in types of educational establishments and range of interests there needs to be a critical mass of schools involved across all sectors. The Collaborative Learning Network will take on the role of matching the nominated educational establishments. At present this critical mass has been set at 40 educational establishments from across the region representing all sectors. Experience may tell us that this core number needs to be increased or decreased. Local Authorities would need to commit to nominating a minimum number of educational establishments for each cohort to be successfully matched.

C. Strategic Leaders who are invested in the Collaborative Learning Network

To ensure effective leadership at a local level every establishment involved in a Collaborative Learning Project will be expected to nominate a promoted member of staff to drive the project forward at establishment level. The role of the promoted member of staff will be to bring strategic vision as well as solution focused towards challenges. This commitment at a senior level will ensure that whilst the projects remain practitioner led they will be strategically informed.

To ensure the quality of Collaborative Learning Projects the projects need to be data-informed, feeding into the strategic plans for the educational establishments involved. Senior leaders have a crucial role in ensuring that participants are empowered through the accurate knowledge of their local context. This ensures projects are not ad hoc and random, but planned well to meet the identified needs of learners and consequently lead to positive outcomes for young people.

It is also important that senior leaders recognise their role in sharing the learning from successful projects. This is imperative to the success of embedding successful interventions into policy, planning at all levels and practice. Without the drive to up-scale projects that have proven, valuable learning will be squandered, limiting the opportunities for improving outcomes for children and young people in the West Partnership. Consequently, it will be important that collaborative learning is reviewed and monitored through the improvement planning processes in each establishment.

7. TIMESCALES

- *May 2019 – Launch of Cohort 1 Collaborative Learning Network*
- *May 2019 - May 2020 - Cohort 1 Collaborative Learning Network Projects*
- *June 2019 – Set up Cohort 2 Key Facilitator's Team*
- *November 2019 – Launch Cohort 2 Collaborative Learning Network*
- *October 2019 – October 2020 – Cohort 2 Collaborative Learning Network Projects*
- *February 2020 – Set up Cohort 3 Key Facilitation Team*
- *May 2020 – Launch of Cohort 3 Collaborative Learning Network*
- *May 2020-May 2021 – Cohort 3 Collaborative Learning Network Projects*

8. THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The role of each Local Authority will be:

- *to promote participation in the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network as an effective method of School Improvement, including Collaborative Learning in school improvement planning systems.*
- *to nominate between 3 and 10 schools each year to join the West Partnership Collaborative Learning Network*
- *to provide one key facilitator per 10 schools nominated*
- *to encourage QIOs to engage in the process as a professional learning opportunity to support educational establishments embedding collaborative learning networks within and across their schools*

9. MEASURING IMPACT

The expectation is that the impact of the Collaborative Learning Network will build over a number of years starting with increased participation and hopefully culminating with culture change.

Aim 1

Increasing the number of participants engaging in the process will be measured through:

- *attendance at events*
- *key facilitators reporting on participation rates*
- *number of projects that successfully report findings at the sharing event*

- reported impact of individual collaborative learning projects

Aim 2

Participants reporting an increased confidence in using enquiry skills

- recording scaling of confidence over time
- evaluation feedback, including an annual survey produced by the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change
- sample focus groups of participants from across the West Partnership

Aim 3

To develop a critical number of practitioners that can promote high quality collaborative methods within and across schools

- quality of findings shared at sharing event
- review of impact after one year
- Further reviews of impact in years 3 and 6?

Aim 4

To create a sustainable model that supports high quality collaborative methods across schools

- uptake and commitment of local authorities at Directorate level on an ongoing basis cohort to cohort
- review of impact after 2 years – including revisiting previous participants

Aim 5

To create a culture of empowerment at all levels that promotes collective responsibility in delivering high standards for all children and young people

- review of how many establishments are using high quality collaborative methods to drive improvement
- pre and post survey of collaborative learning attitudes and experiences at all levels of practitioners, included in the annual survey produced by the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change

Aim 6

To bring about improvement in learning experiences and outcomes for children and young people:

- An annual review of evidence from:
 - o attainment data (CfE and SQA)
 - o each local authority's annual NIF returns
 - o qualitative data from SIFs of Education Scotland inspections of

- establishments which have participated in the network*
- o *Standards and Quality reports*

10. REPORTING PROGRESS

The Collaborative Learning Network (CLN) steering group will receive reports from the Workstream Lead Officer at each meeting of the group outlining progress within each cohort. Such reports will inform future plans for the workstream. These reports will also serve to inform the Senior Partnership Officer and the Operational Delivery Group.

The Sponsor for the CLN workstream will report biannually to the West Partnership Board and based on this will report on the same basis to the Regional Education Committee.