

# Communities for Learning

**Innovation Unit Conference**

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# Context

- ◆ Focus of these field trials is to nurture change and innovation
- ◆ Specific interest in the development of communities for learning and the roles of the workforce
- ◆ Wide and rich range of learning emerging which is broadly around policy interpretation, implementation and change capability

## 3 Key Areas of learning

The ways in which the community is contributing to students' learning

The changing roles and responsibilities of teachers and support staff

The implications for leading and managing communities for learning

# Next Practice ways that are contributing to learning (1)

## At the School and community interface

- ◆ Within communities there is a great deal of motivation to contribute to student and community learning
- ◆ A 'can do attitude' exists, communities are breaking down barriers, building trust and establishing effective communications
- ◆ The community resource is complementary and provides additionality to the school curriculum
- ◆ Schools are deliberately drawing on a wide range of agencies to support the work
- ◆ Leaders are showing confidence and taking risks
- ◆ Leaders are emerging at all levels within the schools and the community

# Next Practice ways that are contributing to learning (2)

## Student and community learning

- ◆ Learners are taking more ownership of their learning which is developing into a rich model for learning for life
- ◆ Learners are becoming notably more confident through engagement with the community
- ◆ Learning has become more real, practical and relevant
- ◆ There has been a focus on emotional barriers to learning and the most effective ways of dealing with this
- ◆ Achievement is being seen in a holistic way and is no longer driven by narrow attainment targets. A range of ways are being developed to recognise achievement
- ◆ Effective practice in personalised and demand led learning opportunities are emerging

# Key questions

- ◆ In what ways can the community add to the school curriculum?
- ◆ How can leaders at all levels within the school and the community be effectively supported to enable them to contribute?
- ◆ In what ways can we recognise achievement and how does this relate to demand led learning opportunities?
- ◆ How can the pupils / students be more engaged in their own learning?

# What are the implications of this Next Practice for the role and responsibilities of the teacher?

A specific and important role is emerging as a designer, enabler, facilitator and coordinator of learning. There is an important and significant challenge to what has been the 'traditional' role of the teacher

# Teacher skill set within the emerging role

- ◆ Able to build change capacity within the school and community
- ◆ Willing to take risks
- ◆ Reflective as a practitioner
- ◆ Capable of systems thinking
- ◆ Focuses more on process and skills for life
- ◆ Skills in assessment for learning focused on learner needs
- ◆ Active listening skills – this includes student and community voice
- ◆ Team working skills – the ability to lead a team and also to be a team player
- ◆ Entrepreneurial skills

# Values and attitudes which shape appropriate behaviour

- ◆ A more collaborative and cooperative way of working with flatter structures
- ◆ The skills and abilities of all are more openly valued – a more inclusive culture is emerging
- ◆ A growing commitment to fostering learning in its widest sense and to recognise the significance of outdoor learning
- ◆ Effective teachers are change capable and welcome other adults into the learning process within the classroom, school and community
- ◆ They find effective ways of building partnerships and working effectively with others on the process of learning
- ◆ This approach is underpinned by a fundamental belief that all, including self, can and should continue to learn

# Key questions

- ◆ How do we develop the capacity for change within teachers?
- ◆ What are the strategies which lead to a more inclusive culture?
- ◆ What are the challenges associated with learning beyond the classroom and what strategies might teachers use to make this a reality
- ◆ What are the implications for ITT and continuous professional development?

# What are the implications of this next practice for the role and responsibilities of support staff?

- ◆ A transition is taking place from the more traditional role of support staff to a role in its own right with a focus on supporting the learning process
- ◆ This is a challenge to the status and power relationships that currently exist in many schools.
- ◆ Roles are changing rapidly and there is huge potential here for the training and development of support staff specifically related to the learning process itself
- ◆ Often this group of staff provide ‘the glue’ to the educational system for a child and the family
- ◆ Community practitioners themselves are key resources that sit alongside teachers and support staff

# Key roles emerging are many and varied

- ◆ The emotional support of learners
- ◆ Brokers and key workers between school and family
- ◆ Facilitators of family learning
- ◆ Key significant adults in the life of students – a key person for a student to relate to
- ◆ The new front line for schools with families and connectors with the wider community
- ◆ Members of the school leadership team

## Skill set within the emerging role

- ◆ There is a growing recognition that these are skilled roles
- ◆ Life skills and passion are significant and important
- ◆ Personal and interpersonal skills

These developments raise significant issues in relation to recruitment, training, performance management and remuneration

# Key questions

- ◆ What steps are currently taking place to address these important issues at national, local and school level?
- ◆ What steps should be taking place?
- ◆ What are the key training and development requirements for support staff?
- ◆ Are there training and development requirements for teachers to enable them to work effectively with support staff – if so what are they?
- ◆ What are the implications for initial teacher training?

# What are the implications of this next practice for leading and managing a community for learning?

## Significant skills within the leadership group include

- ◆ Change management capacity
- ◆ Tools and techniques for remodelling to ensure cultural change
- ◆ Communication skills
- ◆ Strategic thinking
- ◆ Deploying resources
- ◆ Creativity and problem solving
- ◆ Contextual literacy
- ◆ Project management skills
- ◆ Team building skills
- ◆ Staff development including the identification and growth of talent
- ◆ Courage and risk taking

# Underpinning values and attitudes

- ◆ Seeing the community as a valuable resource – outward looking
- ◆ Able to see learning beyond the confines of the school
- ◆ Able to maintain a focus on learning
- ◆ Positive ‘can do’ attitude, passion and commitment
- ◆ See themselves as learners and engage in reflection

# Key questions

- ◆ What are the training and development implications for school leaders, at all levels? For leaders in other agencies? Community leaders?
- ◆ Are there other significant skills that should be added to this list?
- ◆ What are the implications for lines of accountability in a community for learners and how are these different from a traditional school setting?
- ◆ What are the key issues that need to be addressed when developing trust within an inclusive culture?

# The fundamental questions

- ◆ In what ways can the local community contribute to the learning of the pupils / students in their schools?
- ◆ How do the roles and responsibilities of teachers and support staff need to change and what needs to be done to make this happen?
- ◆ What are the implications for leading and managing communities for learning?