



A guide for curriculum leaders

Leading a curriculum network

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Introduction

Curriculum networks operate within and across NSW public schools in a wide range of configurations and contexts. Networks sometimes arise to support the local implementation of a new syllabus and may only operate for a limited duration. Other networks operate on a more sustained, self-managed model with ongoing collaboration and communication between participants.

Curriculum networks can be referred to in many ways including:

- community of practice
- community of schools
- education network
- learning circle
- education cluster.

Effective curriculum networks provide a collaborative and supportive environment for teachers to build their capacity to implement new or existing syllabus. Sharing of high quality informed practice and teaching resources reflective of the syllabus increases teacher knowledge to support the improvement of student learning outcomes.

Background: Curriculum Networks

The Curriculum Networks Project was initiated to provide a better understanding of the use of curriculum networks to increase the reach of curriculum support and build capacity at the local level.

Throughout 2019, teachers, principals, and school executive across NSW were asked to identify the characteristics of an effective curriculum network. Small and large schools, regional, remote, rural and urban, primary and secondary schools were represented.

Two Principals-in-residence worked with the curriculum team to gather data, review research and identify the characteristics of effective networks. Individual surveys and focus group interviews were also conducted with network leaders, participants and curriculum advisors.

It was found that effective curriculum networks supported its members with:

- curriculum expertise
- leadership opportunities
- quality professional learning
- a consistent message
- rich teaching resources

- regular collaboration.

Governance and evidence collection were also acknowledged as essential characteristics of effective curriculum networks. Aspects of governance and evidence collection can be seen below.

Vision, values and culture:

- clear vision statement
- vision statement agreed upon and communicated
- transparency in decision making
- strong collegial professional relationships built on trust
- sharing of successes and challenges.

Structures, procedures and systems:

- clear governance guidelines, including a constitution
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- action plan that aligns with the network's vision
- clear induction processes for new members
- support of principals and leadership teams across the schools
- accountability structures
- formal evidence collected at regular intervals to measure the impact of the network.

A 'ground up' approach with strong school leader support was identified as the most effective and productive network model. It was found that this approach provided autonomy and authentic opportunities for network sustainability, mentoring and capacity building when coupled with a shared purpose and vision.

The [Curriculum Network Project 2019 Executive Summary](#) outlines the key findings and evidence on which the support for curriculum networks has been developed.

Purpose and benefits of curriculum networks

Curriculum networks:

- provide support to address the authentic needs of local educators
- build teacher expertise in curriculum
- deliver contextually tailored, professional learning opportunities
- build evidence-based practice aimed at creating collective efficacy
- develop and share high-quality informed pedagogical practices.

The benefits of belonging to a curriculum network are:

- collegial dissemination of curriculum related information
- a safe environment where educational practitioners come together, work collaboratively and collegially to share best practice
- opportunities for developing and sharing teaching resources
- authentic opportunities for mentoring and capacity building
- access to current research
- opportunities for the development of curriculum leadership.

Curriculum network – roles and responsibilities

Curriculum networks play a vital role in ensuring the effective implementation of curriculum in NSW Public Schools.

Curriculum network leaders

The role of the curriculum network leader is to:

- collaborate with network members to develop the vision and goals and build the values and culture of the network. This information could be used to create an action plan for the network – Appendix 1, p 10
- lead network members to develop a network constitution – Appendix 3, p 13. The constitution provides a clear statement of the rules that govern the actions and activities of the network. It represents the way in which the network will be led and the expectations of the members. It should be agreed upon by all members
- facilitate network meetings by providing a clear focus
- share relevant information, resources and research to support network members
- negotiate with, and communicate to members about scheduled meeting times and locations
- compile and distribute agendas and minutes of each meeting – Appendix 4 and 5, p 15 and 16
- collect formal evidence at regular intervals to measure the impact of the network to inform future directions.

Curriculum network members

The role of the curriculum network members is to:

- contribute to the development of the network action plan, constitution and meeting timetable
- provide staff at their school with current information, advice and resources from the network meetings where appropriate
- apply professional learning into their classroom to improve student learning outcomes
- provide feedback to inform future directions.

Resources and advice for leading curriculum networks

Professional learning for network leaders

The NSW Department of Education has released the 'Leading Effective Curriculum Networks' course to build the capacity of current and aspiring school leaders to actively lead curriculum networks. Effective curriculum networks provide a collaborative and supportive environment that builds teacher capacity for implementation of syllabus through quality curriculum support and sharing of resources to improve student learning outcomes.

Each module focuses on key aspects in the development of curriculum networks, building the expertise of the participants to plan, record, review and support teachers across NSW. The tasks in each module provide a practical foundation to establish, build and sustain curriculum networks. They also provide the tools to support leaders to plan for and review the vision, needs and outcomes of the network.

This course includes five, self-paced, compulsory modules which allow for personalised exploration of concepts and tools:

- setting the scene
- guiding vision, values and culture
- supporting effective curriculum networks
- measuring impact
- planning for action.

This course is aligned to the Highly Accomplished Teacher accreditation standards and is recommended professional learning for all curriculum network leaders.

Governance resources

A suite of governance resources can be found in the appendix to support network leaders. These include the:

- curriculum network action plan template – Appendix 1, p 10
- curriculum network checklist – Appendix 2, p 11
- curriculum network constitution template – Appendix 3, p 13
- curriculum network agenda template – Appendix 4, p 15
- curriculum network minutes template – Appendix 5, p 16.

Governance advice

Network meeting planning

Curriculum network leaders should:

- timetable meeting dates for the year
 - use agenda templates provided to create agendas
- register meetings in myPL. There are 2 courses available on MyPL to support leaders through the process of navigating MyPL:
 - [Making MyPL work for you](#) – Making MyPL work for you is a 1-hour course providing detailed training in course design and set up to ensure all Learning Authors are maximising the MyPL system capabilities
 - [A Beginners Guide to MyPL](#) – A Beginner's Guide to MyPL course provides all users with an overview of the MyPL system. This 1 hour session will take you through some key activities that can be accomplished in MyPL, including requesting support via the online widget and helpdesk, user profiles, My Learning, adding a diary entry, recording TIPD, My E-Portfolio, My Learning Transcript, searching and enrolling in professional learning, Q and A
- record all participants' attendance
- record the meeting for those unable to attend
- begin meetings on time and with a welcome to Country or acknowledgement of Country
- include housekeeping information at the beginning of the meeting
- introduce and thank any guest speakers
- present updates
- address any post-meeting tasks for members, such as feedback or practical activities
- close the meeting, include details of the next meeting and any pre-tasks for members to have prepared or considered
- distribute the minutes to network members
- mark participants' attendance on MyPL.

Advice on gathering evidence

Gathering evidence of the needs and impact of your network will guide your decision making as well as indicate the effectiveness of your network's activity.

The evaluation that you may undertake generally falls into two categories:

- process evaluation

- shows the reach and scale of a project or initiative by examining what has taken place. This evidence often comes from administrative records (governance).
- demonstrates the quality of the activities undertaken. This evidence may include participant's feedback, comparison of observed practice with recommended practice or something not going as planned.
- outcome evaluation – provides evidence of your network's impact. This evidence requires identification of what has changed and why.

The Department's [evaluation resource hub](#) provides a rich source of information to ensure that quality evaluation informs decisions about future directions for your network.

Refer to Module 4 of the e-learning course 'Leading Effective Curriculum Networks' for further support.

Accreditation advice to support your network leadership journey

Evidence for Lead Teacher, Highly Accomplished Teacher and Proficient Teacher accreditation

NESA's Policy for Accreditation at Lead Teacher, Highly Accomplished Teacher and Proficient Teacher gives an overview of accreditation processes. At all levels, providing evidence must include documentary evidence.

Information can be found on the curriculum networks website to support you in your leadership journey as a curriculum network leader. This includes samples of documentary evidence that may support your accreditation.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Curriculum network action plan template

Curriculum network purpose:

Vision statement:

Curriculum network action plan template

Needs What needs to happen?	Activities What will you do?	Inputs When, who and what is needed to make it happen?	Outcomes What will be achieved?	Evaluation How will you know its effectiveness?

Appendix 2 – Curriculum network checklist

Vision, values and culture checklist

Vision, values and culture	Yes	No
Clear vision statement		
Vision statement agreed upon and communicated		
Transparency in decision making		
Strong collegial professional relationships built on trust		
Sharing of successes and challenges		

Structures and systems checklist

Structures and systems	Yes	No
Clear governance guidelines, including a constitution.		
Clearly defined roles and responsibilities.		
Action plan that aligns with the network vision.		
Clear induction processes for new members.		
Support of principals and leadership teams across schools.		
Accountability structures:	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> agenda 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> minutes 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> memberships-principals/deputy principals/assistant principals/head teachers/teachers 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meeting protocols (face-to-face and online) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> budget and finances 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> resource collection 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> online platform are maintained, monitored and regularly updated 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> commitment by network members to regularly attend meetings and engage with the network 		
Sustainability:	Yes	No
Leadership opportunities embedded in network practices.		
Mentoring opportunities embedded in network practice.		
Structured nomination process:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> elections 		

Structures and systems	Yes	No
• EOIs		
• self-nominations		
Succession planning in place for leadership roles:	Yes	No
• mentoring		
• shadowing		
• relieving		

Quality professional learning checklist

Quality professional learning	Yes	No
Tailored and based on needs of the network		
Held constantly with purpose and aligned to the network vision		
Participants provide feedback		
Registered on MyPL		
Informs practice and is evidenced to improve student learning		
Department curriculum personnel engage with and support the network		
Curriculum expertise and practice is shared within the network		
Development and sharing of high quality resources across the network		

Appendix 3 – Curriculum network constitution template

The constitution of a network contains the rules that govern the actions and activities of a group.

Articles

Describe each article below.

Article I – name

[State the name of the network]

Article II – purpose

What are the aims of the network?

How will the network function?

For whom does the network exist?

Whom does it benefit?

Article III – membership

Who is eligible to be a member?

How do they become a member?

Article IV – officer

Title of officers.

What are the responsibilities of each position?

What is the procedure for filling a vacancy?

Article V – elections

When will elections be held?

Who is eligible to run?

How will nominations will be made?

Article VI – meetings and quorum

How often meetings will take place?

How many members are required for a quorum?

Article VII – finances

How will the network obtain money?

How will the network spend money?

Who will be responsible for overseeing and tracking the budget?

Article VIII – amendments

How can the constitution be changed?

Who proposes changes?

How are the changes proposed?

What are the voting requirements to change the constitution?

Appendix 4 – Curriculum network agenda template

Date: Enter date

Attendance: Enter those in attendance

Apologies: Enter apologies

Curriculum network agenda template

Items for discussion	Minutes	Actions to be taken

Appendix 5 – Curriculum network minutes template

- Date** Enter date
- Location** Enter location
- Attendees** Enter those in attendance
- Apologies** Enter apologies
- Chair** Name of chair
- Minutes** Name of minute taker

Curriculum network minutes template

Agenda item	Discussion	Action/Responsibility