Leading a curriculum network

A guide for curriculum network leaders

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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 participant collaboration and communication.

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 syllabuses and connect regularly. Sharing high-quality, evidence-informed practice and teaching resources reflective of the syllabus increases teacher knowledge to support the improvement of student learning outcomes.

## Background

The Curriculum networks project provides support to existing and new curriculum networks to improve the reach and engagement with curriculum supports 7–12, and build curriculum leadership and implementation at the local level.

Effective curriculum networks support their members with:

* curriculum expertise
* leadership opportunities
* quality professional learning
* a consistent message
* rich teaching resources
* regular collaboration.

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

### Vision, values and culture

When leading a curriculum network, the following needs to be considered and developed:

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

### Structures, procedures and systems

The most effective and productive curriculum network model is a ‘ground-up’ approach with strong school leader support. This approach provides autonomy and authentic opportunities for curriculum network sustainability, mentoring and capacity building when coupled with a shared purpose and vision. These opportunities can be negotiated with the support of school leadership teams and curriculum network members by:

* establishing clear governance guidelines, including a constitution
* clearly defining roles and responsibilities
* developing an action plan that aligns with the curriculum network’s vision
* providing comprehensive induction processes for new members
* supporting principals and leadership teams across the schools
* organising accountability structures – agendas, minutes, attendance documents
* collecting formal evidence at regular intervals to measure the impact of the curriculum network.

# Purpose and benefits of curriculum networks

Curriculum networks:

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

The benefits of belonging to a curriculum network are:

* the collegial dissemination of curriculum-related information
* establishing a safe environment where educational practitioners come together, and work collaboratively and collegially to share best practice and ideas
* providing opportunities for developing and sharing teaching resources
* developing authentic opportunities for mentoring and capacity building
* gaining access to current research to support professional discussions and innovation
* organising opportunities for the development of curriculum leadership skills.

# Roles and responsibilities

Curriculum networks play a vital role in ensuring the effective implementation of curriculum in NSW public schools.

## Secondary Curriculum

Our commitment to you is to:

* support you as the curriculum network leader to continue leading your network successfully or start a new curriculum network
* advocate for you and your curriculum network, including advertising your meetings in our Statewide Staffroom
* keep you updated about crucial curriculum information
* facilitate a curriculum network leader meeting twice a year
* coordinate key learning area (KLA) teams from the department to present at curriculum network events as required.

## Curriculum network leaders

The role of the curriculum network leader is to:

* collaborate with curriculum 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
* lead curriculum network members to develop a network constitution. The constitution provides a clear statement of the rules that govern the actions and activities of the curriculum network. It represents how the network will be led and the members' expectations. All members should agree upon it
* facilitate curriculum network meetings by providing a clear focus
* share relevant information, resources and research to support curriculum network members
* negotiate with and communicate to members about scheduled meeting times and locations
* compile and distribute agendas and minutes of each meeting
* collect formal evidence at regular intervals to measure the impact of the curriculum network and inform future directions.

## Curriculum network members

The role of a curriculum network member is to:

* contribute to the development of the curriculum network action plan, constitution and meeting timetable
* provide staff at their school with current information, advice and resources from the curriculum 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

Leading a curriculum network requires a range of organisational structures and resources to be effective. The following resources will support you in leading a curriculum network.

## Curriculum network governance and operations

Curriculum network meetings can take a range of formats – online, face-to-face, full-day, half-day or after school – depending on the network members’ needs. The appendices provide a suite of governance resources to support curriculum network leaders.

## Governance advice

The following guide provides suggestions for the smooth running of curriculum network meetings.

### Membership list

Maintain a record of network members and their contact details. The details should contain each member’s full name, school and email address at minimum. It is important to keep data updated for contacting and updating members on curriculum network meetings and activities.

### Curriculum network meeting planning

Curriculum network leaders:

* timetable meeting dates for the year
* create agendas using [Appendix 5 – curriculum network agenda template](#_Appendix_5_–)
* schedule meetings on My Professional Learning (MyPL) – there are courses available on MyPL if you require support to navigate the process
* [Making MyPL work for you](https://myplsso.education.nsw.gov.au/mylearning/catalogue/details/a12c129f-bb1d-e811-8967-0003ff14bf79)
* [A Beginners Guide to MyPL](https://myplsso.education.nsw.gov.au/mylearning/catalogue/details/02748b3b-ce83-e811-87c3-0003ff14f73b)
* consider and organise venue, catering, network materials, pre-readings and other necessary supports.

### Advertising

To grow existing curriculum networks, you can advertise your upcoming meeting or event in the appropriate KLA statewide staffroom. If the meeting is cross-KLA, you can ask one of the members of the Secondary curriculum team to advertise it to the [Teaching and Learning 7–12 Statewide Staffroom](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/statewide-staffrooms#:~:text=Teaching%20and%20Learning%207%E2%80%9312) or to direct you to the best platform. This not only informs existing members but may also alert new teachers in your area.

Please send all relevant information **at least 2 weeks prior to your meeting date**.

You may also wish to notify your members via a targeted email or through your own curriculum network channel on Microsoft Teams.

Include an agenda in all advertising.

### During the meeting

* Provide a sign-in sheet to record all participants’ attendance
* If the meeting is taking place online, record the meeting for those unable to attend
* Begin meetings on time and with an Acknowledgement of Country
* Include housekeeping information at the beginning of the meeting
* If the meeting is held online, ask someone to monitor the chat
* Introduce and thank any guest speakers
* Present updates
* Address any post-meeting tasks for members, such as feedback or practical activities
* If the meeting is not scheduled on MyPL, encourage participants to enter the information on their Teacher Accreditation Management System (eTAMS) account
* Close the meeting by including details of the next meeting and any pre-tasks for members to have prepared or considered
* Include a meeting evaluation

### After the meeting

* Distribute the minutes to curriculum network members
* Mark participants’ attendance on MyPL (if used for scheduling)
* Review the evaluation data to guide future directions

### Advice on gathering evidence

Gathering evidence of your curriculum network's needs and impact will guide your decision-making and indicate the effectiveness of your network’s activity.

The evaluation that you may undertake generally falls into 2 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 participants’ feedback, comparison of observed practice with recommended practice or something not going as planned
* outcome evaluation
* provides evidence of your curriculum network’s impact – this evidence requires the identification of what has changed and why.

The department’s [Evaluation resource hub](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/professional-learning/pl-resources/evaluation-resource-hub.html) provides a rich source of information to ensure that quality evaluation informs decisions about your curriculum network's future direction. You may consider some professional evaluation exit slips for your curriculum network meetings on the department’s website:

* [Evaluation resources – Surveys](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/leading-curriculum-k-12/support-for-school-planning/evaluating-curriculum-implementation/evaluation-resources-surveys)
* [Sample: Professional Learning exit slip](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/leading-curriculum-k-12/support-for-school-planning/evaluating-curriculum-implementation/evaluation-resources-surveys#:~:text=The-,Professional%20Learning%20exit%20slip,-External%20link)
* [Sample: Professional Learning entry and or exit slip – school leader survey](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/leading-curriculum-k-12/support-for-school-planning/evaluating-curriculum-implementation/evaluation-resources-surveys#:~:text=Professional%20Learning%20entry%20and%20or%20exit%20slip%20%E2%80%93%20school%20leader%20survey).

# Advice to support your curriculum network leadership journey

The curriculum network leadership role is a diverse one, and there is a need to strengthen and scale your influence by capitalising on enabling conditions, and removing any barriers for you and your curriculum network team members. There may be limitations to what you can do, but by planning effectively and preparing for effective leadership, your curriculum network can remain on track to work towards your shared vision.

The Leading Effective Curriculum Implementation (LECI) professional learning is highly recommended for curriculum network leaders, and is available for leaders and aspiring leaders to complete online. [Module 1: Understanding Self to Lead Improvement](https://myplsso.education.nsw.gov.au/mylearning/catalogue/details/8d9fb2c6-d1b8-ee11-84da-0003ff498a2f) and [Module 2: Planning for Change](https://myplsso.education.nsw.gov.au/mylearning/catalogue/details/b1bb4ac2-d6f6-ee11-8364-0003ffd045cf) can support leaders in their preparation to lead a curriculum network. The modules are accredited at Highly Accomplished. You can also find information on applying for and maintaining Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation and a suite of support resources at the department’s [HALT Hub](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/team/19%3AX2mxtNlN6ZOO1ScYljITJGdPXYDe18pCoQmkqJn4zwk1%40thread.tacv2/conversations?groupId=088af8ee-b0fe-4032-8ef4-1875a5e550d5&tenantId=05a0e69a-418a-47c1-9c25-9387261bf991) and NESA’s [Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher accreditation](https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/teacher-accreditation/halt-accreditation) webpage..

Further information and resources can be found on the [Curriculum networks](https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/curriculum-networks/delivering) webpage to support you in your leadership journey as a curriculum network leader. This includes samples of documentary evidence that may support your accreditation.

# 

# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – curriculum network action plan template

Table 1 – curriculum network action plan template

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ****Curriculum network goals**** | ****Goal 1**** | ****By when?**** | ****Goal 2**** | ****By when?**** | ****Goal 3**** | ****By when?**** |
| ****Curriculum network goals**** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ****Enablers**** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ****Barriers**** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ****Support needed**** |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## Appendix 2 – curriculum network checklist

Table 2 – curriculum network checklist

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ****Vision, values and culture**** | ****Yes**** | ****No**** |
| ****Clear vision statement**** |  |  |
| ****Vision statement agreed upon and communicated**** |  |  |
| ****Transparency in decision-making**** |  |  |
| ****Collegial relationships built on trust**** |  |  |
| ****Sharing of successes and challenges**** |  |  |
| ****Clear governance guidelines, including a constitution**** |  |  |
| ****Clearly defined roles and responsibilities**** |  |  |
| ****Action plan that aligns with the curriculum network vision**** |  |  |
| ****Clear induction processes for new members**** |  |  |
| ****Support of principals and leadership teams across schools**** |  |  |

## Appendix 3 – self-reflection tool

This tool can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum network. It can be scheduled as a regular activity or at the end of the school year.

Table 3 – self-reflection tool for meetings

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ****Structures and systems – meetings**** | ****Yes**** | ****No**** |
| ****Meetings occur regularly**** |  |  |
| ****Meetings have a clear agenda**** |  |  |
| ****Meetings have a strong professional learning focus**** |  |  |
| ****Meetings are responsive to members’ needs**** |  |  |
| ****Meetings take a range of formats, for example, TeachMeets, professional learning, sharing sessions**** |  |  |
| ****Department curriculum personnel invited to present, engage with or support the curriculum network**** |  |  |
| ****Members leave each meeting with new learning and/or collaboratively created or shared resources**** |  |  |

Table 4 – self-reflection tool for leaders

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ****Structures and systems – leaders**** | ****Yes**** | ****No**** |
| ****Leader is aware of and actively involved in statewide initiatives**** |  |  |
| ****Leader is enabled to work towards higher levels of accreditation**** |  |  |
| ****Mentoring opportunities are embedded in curriculum network practices**** |  |  |
| ****Shadowing or relieving opportunities are embedded**** |  |  |

Table 5 – self-reflection tool for members

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Structures and systems – members | Yes | No |
| All department teacher members belong in at least one statewide staffroom and have their notifications set up appropriately |  |  |
| Expertise is valued, recognised and high-levelled |  |  |
| The majority of potential members attend most meetings |  |  |
| Members return regularly |  |  |
| Members collaborate and contribute to the curriculum network’s success, for example, by sharing successful teaching strategies |  |  |
| Members are provided with and take advantage of leadership opportunities, for example, presenting at a meeting |  |  |
| Members are enthusiastic and encouraging |  |  |

Table 6 – self-reflection tool for data and communication

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ****Structures and systems – data and communication**** | ****Yes**** | ****No**** |
| ****Curriculum network has data collection processes in place, including agendas, sign-in sheets, evaluations, financial records and spreadsheets of attendance**** |  |  |
| ****Communication goes beyond the meetings, for example, an agreed platform or regular email contact**** |  |  |
| ****Members are aware of activities and combined interschool activities in the region**** |  |  |

## Appendix 4 – sign-in sheet template

**Date**:

**Venue**:

Table 7 – sign-in sheet

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Email | School | Signature |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

## Appendix 5 – curriculum network agenda template

**Date:**

**Attendance:**

**Apologies:**

Table 9 – curriculum network agenda template

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Agenda item | Minutes | Actions to be taken |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

## Appendix 6 – curriculum network minutes template

**Date**:

**Venue**:

**Attendees**:

**Apologies**:

**Chair**:

**Minutes**:

Table 10 – curriculum network minutes template

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Agenda item | Discussion | Action, responsibility, date due by |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

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