

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

SELF ASSESSMENT TOOL

This tool provides a set of actions that networks perform at increasing levels of maturity, as they evolve into effective Communities of Practice. Use the tool to inform the ongoing development of your network. Bring the key members of your network together (including your SEIL) to critically examine where your network is currently placed, and what you can do to develop it as an effective Community of Practice. The tool is drawn from recent research¹ into effective collaboration between schools, but is not exhaustive or conclusive – it should be used to guide thinking, rather than be regarded as a recipe for success.



	EMERGING	EVOLVING	EMBEDDING	EXCELLING
<p>COMMUNITY: HOW WE WORK TOGETHER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We meet regularly as a network. <input type="checkbox"/> We are primarily task driven. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a schedule of activities planned. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a core of members who do most of the work to establish and run the network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We agree, document and provide protocols for how we work as a network. <input type="checkbox"/> Our membership includes the primary, secondary and specialist schools in our area. <input type="checkbox"/> We regularly share knowledge, data and resources. <input type="checkbox"/> We are all active members in our network, with over 80% attendance at most meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> We welcome new members and have induction protocols to help them join. <input type="checkbox"/> We conduct school visits in each other's schools and provide feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We have, and use, agreed protocols on how we operate as a community. We review them and challenge each other to comply with them. <input type="checkbox"/> We are guided by a network plan that is regularly reviewed. <input type="checkbox"/> We have agreed systems for peer review that involve sharing data and resources. <input type="checkbox"/> Our roles and accountabilities are well-defined and agreed. <input type="checkbox"/> We have agreed protocols and metrics by which members hold each other to account. <input type="checkbox"/> We share resources regularly according to needs across our network, including human and financial resources. <input type="checkbox"/> Membership of our network extends to Assistant Principals and Leading Teachers for priority projects. <input type="checkbox"/> It's easy for new members to join and feel like they belong. <input type="checkbox"/> We induct new members carefully using our protocols. <input type="checkbox"/> We celebrate achievements within our network. <input type="checkbox"/> We regularly participate in classroom visits and provide feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We have a high level of social capital among the schools in our network that is a foundation for great professional collaboration. <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership is distributed, not centralised. <input type="checkbox"/> We are capable practitioners of system leadership. <input type="checkbox"/> We actively collaborate with other networks and external agencies such as health and human services, community organisations, tertiary institutions and private enterprise to improve our professional practice. <input type="checkbox"/> Our network helps foster and maintain strong relationships between the different institutions through which students' progress, from preschool to tertiary study. <input type="checkbox"/> We interact with all relevant resources available within the Department of Education and Training. <input type="checkbox"/> Membership of our network extends to all members of staff. <input type="checkbox"/> Students have a voice in our decision-making. <input type="checkbox"/> We do not rest on our laurels or get comfortable. We continually challenge ourselves to improve.
<p>PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: HOW WE LEARN TOGETHER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We share experiences about teaching practices during network meetings. <input type="checkbox"/> We occasionally reference data. <input type="checkbox"/> We provide collegial support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We regularly discuss and share teaching practices. <input type="checkbox"/> We share information, concepts and strategies based on our practical experience. <input type="checkbox"/> We know about other members' professional practices in the focus areas we have chosen to work on. <input type="checkbox"/> We arrange professional development from experts in relevant fields. <input type="checkbox"/> We reflect on our own practices based on information shared at the network. <input type="checkbox"/> We occasionally give and receive feedback about each other's performance data, with a focus on improving teaching practices. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a good balance of formal and informal structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We regularly share our schools' data. <input type="checkbox"/> A high level of trust exists between members of the network regarding the information we share. <input type="checkbox"/> Reciprocal challenging is firmly established between members. <input type="checkbox"/> We take a joint practice development approach, using processes and protocols for observing each other's teaching, reviewing each other's learning materials and providing coaching and mentoring. <input type="checkbox"/> We support work shadowing and other forms of direct observation for developing teachers. <input type="checkbox"/> Progress towards our network learning goals is monitored regularly, and evaluated annually. <input type="checkbox"/> We document and share evidence of impact and review our work in the light of it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We hold one another accountable for maintaining our focus, and persist in pursuing our improvement goals despite setbacks and difficulties. <input type="checkbox"/> Reciprocal challenging on specific, evidence-based outcomes is a key feature of our self-improving network and is embedded in all of our development activities. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a strong culture of transparency of results and practice across our network. <input type="checkbox"/> Members trust, value and invite critical perspectives. <input type="checkbox"/> We partner with other schools in and beyond our network, sharing our best resources where they are most needed. <input type="checkbox"/> We maintain ongoing relationships with professional experts in relevant fields.
<p>PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE: WHAT WE LEARN TOGETHER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We have agreed on the FISO priorities for our network. <input type="checkbox"/> We discuss and share good practice, and sometimes arrange expert speakers to present at meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We have clear learning goals for our network that support agreed FISO priorities and a schedule of activities that aims to support them. <input type="checkbox"/> Most of our activities address needs shared by all members. <input type="checkbox"/> Our activities explicitly address improving teaching practices. <input type="checkbox"/> We give some attention to identifying and nurturing leadership talent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We have a clear and shared focus for improvement in student outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/> Our scheduled activities support joint practice development, not just transfer of professional knowledge. <input type="checkbox"/> We cultivate multiple dynamic, interlinked relationships across our schools at all levels. <input type="checkbox"/> Our members have sufficient data literacy to make the most of our shared data. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a clear strategic plan that supports the achievement of our agreed FISO priorities, which is regularly reviewed. <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership development is inherent in all professional development. <input type="checkbox"/> We do not focus on operational matters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We are guided by a long-term vision for improving student outcomes that extends for five or more years. <input type="checkbox"/> Our collective moral purpose is shared with our wider networks in our communities, including external agencies such as community organisations and tertiary institutions. <input type="checkbox"/> We have common, collective data structures enabling us to share data on all our schools across our entire network and have tools to usefully analyse and communicate the data. <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership development is closely tied to practice through mentoring and coaching.
<p>PROFESSIONAL ETHIC: WHY WE LEARN TOGETHER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We value getting together and sharing experiences and ideas for our individual schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Our network has a shared collective moral purpose. <input type="checkbox"/> We personally benefit by participating in the network. <input type="checkbox"/> The network contributes to our development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Our purpose is learning together to improve student outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/> We have a strong focus on fostering genuine, mutual partnerships and work hard to overcome competitiveness between individual schools that detracts from collective educational outcomes and wellbeing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A profound sense of collective moral purpose and responsibility for the educational outcomes and wellbeing of all children in our network informs everything we do – in our individual schools and across the network. <input type="checkbox"/> Altruism prevails – our high-performing schools collaborate with poorly performing schools on specific outcomes, inside and beyond our network. <input type="checkbox"/> Our network is an important enabler of long-term improvement across our education system.
<p>ENDORSED AND ENABLED: WHAT HELPS US LEARN TOGETHER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Our regional and area support teams show an interest in and commitment to our network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in the network is supported by our schools. <input type="checkbox"/> The network has sufficient access to resources to function well. <input type="checkbox"/> Results and achievements of our network are officially recognised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We make sufficient time to participate in the network successfully. <input type="checkbox"/> Our systems and standards enable easy transfer of records as students move from preschool to primary, primary to secondary and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> We are a self-improving school system, a product of our joint practice development, high social capital between members, collective moral purpose and ongoing evaluation and challenge practised within and between schools. <input type="checkbox"/> We support teachers to experience other school settings as part of their career development. <input type="checkbox"/> We are resilient and self-sustaining – our network continues to operate successfully, regardless of changes to resourcing.

¹ Bentley, T. and Cazaly, C. (2015). The shared work of learning: Lifting educational achievement through collaboration. Mitchell Institute research report No. 03/2015; Farrar, Maggie (2015). Learning together: The power of cluster-based school improvement, Centre for Strategic Education Paper 249; Hargreaves, David H (2012). A Self-Improving School System: Towards Maturity National College for School Leadership; Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). Cultivating communities of practice. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.