



Focus:

Aspiring to Leadership (A2L) is a programme for teachers in the early phase of their careers who are looking to extend their leadership beyond the classroom and for teachers new to a leadership role.

Context

The programme was created following the end, in 2011, of the National College MLDP provision and the emergence of the new national leadership curriculum: NPQH, NPQSL, NPQML. Headteachers in the Alliance had valued MLDP and they requested a programme for middle leaders that would be delivered locally. A2L was planned in June 2013 and the first cohort started in November of that year and finished in April 2014.

Following MLDP, the Alliance had capacity to create and deliver a new leadership programme. Four staff at Wildern School had successfully completed National College training programmes. An Assistant Head had been assessed following the 4 day MLDP facilitator training and had used her accreditation to lead 2 local cohorts. Three Advanced Skills Teachers had completed the Olevi ITP and OTP facilitator training. The Alliance offered both of these programmes in 2012 with no take-up.

The Assistant Head was keen to use her skills and learning to design and deliver local provision in collaboration with other outstanding practitioners. It was an opportunity to draw on skills, knowledge and experience of the Alliance partners. It was also important to use the lessons learned from MLDP. The A2L design and development group consisted: 2 primary Deputy Headteachers, 2 secondary Assistant Headteachers (one of whom was an SLE) and the Director of the Alliance.

The Assistant Head had completed the Future Change Makers (FCM) programme in 2011 and wanted to model A2L on the successes of both MLDP and FCM. The Director had developed FCM in partnership with Professor John West Burnham and the National College as part of the *Local Solutions Succession Planning* projects. It incorporated elements of successful leadership learning, for example, high quality facilitation, an enquiry visit, mentoring by an effective role model, formal and informal networking and problem-solving linked to workplace.

A2L followed one of the core principles of the Alliance and FCM – cross phase learning. This makes explicit the continuity of our pupils' learning journey and the implications for participants' leadership in the future.

The programme

Leadership learning is a long-term process and requires personal and individual commitment and responsibility. Each school context offers day-to-day learning on the job. A2L broadens perspectives by giving access to colleagues from diverse contexts, as well as opportunities to learn with, and from, experienced lead facilitators. Participants on the programme are in the early phase of their leadership development and the programme gives a framework for addressing generic leadership themes and questions whilst at the same time personalising the learning. Participants are engaged in a learning

process over a 6 month period. The intention is to help them grow in confidence as well as extending their skills, knowledge and influence as leaders.

Facts about the programme:

- 6 sessions November – April; timing 4-6pm - session one is extended 1-5pm; cost £250
- capacity for 25-30 participants (23 2013-14)
- facilitation by experienced senior leaders and Specialist Leaders of Education
- self-review process based on a qualities and behaviours framework
- A Test- Learn- Adapt approach
- Networking
- Coaching or in-school support
- Signposting to resources, relevant research and reading

Application process or Learning Statement

MLPD has helped the Assistant Headteacher to reflect on the way in which the following had inhibited learning:

- participants who had been sent by their Headteacher and could not articulate a personal reason for joining the programme
- participants who were not reflective nor willing to engage in learning outside the formal sessions
- inconsistencies in the quality and provision of in-school coaching.

One of the indicators of the first 2 points in particular was non-attendance at sessions. The Alliance wanted to be explicit from the outset that individual responsibility for learning was essential and there was an expectation that participants would be reflective and had to be prepared to be self-analytical. This led to a 'Learning Statement' (see attached) to engage potential participants in a process of reflection in advance of the programme and to secure the commitment of a Senior Leader or Headteacher through their written supporting statement.

Planning and delivery

The planning group wanted to design a programme which challenged the participants to reflect on their personal effectiveness and their emotional intelligence as well as offering opportunities to gain knowledge and skills. The planning group members reflected on their own leadership learning experiences as well as their current roles in order to make decisions about session content. They decided to focus each session around a central question to help the participants reflect on the implications for them personally and professionally. For example, 'What's my footprint?' when looking



at self-evaluation and the role leaders have in building leadership capacity in others. At the heart of A2L is a values driven programme.

It was agreed that each session would either be facilitated by members of the planning group or a pair of experienced leaders who had credibility and a successful track record. Six SLEs were involved in facilitation. The programme was overseen by the Assistant Headteacher; she kept the continuity between sessions and carried out an informal quality assurance role with the Director.

'...if you want to be a leader, you have to be a real human being. You must recognise the true meaning of life before you can become a great leader. You must understand yourself first.' Peter Senge (2004)

The Process

Self-analysis

The programme requires participants to be active and proactive learners. The first session involves self analysis using the Hampshire Qualities and Behaviours (Appendix 2) to provide information about personal areas for development using the language of leadership. Day 1 is an extended 4 hour session to allow time for administration, explanation of the expectations for each session, the final day presentations and most importantly time for self-analysis and extended discussion.

Enquiry

Participants are asked to identify a question they are trying to answer in school and to practically apply their learning to lead a change they wish to see. They are required to present their findings in the final session to a table group of participants who will listen and ask questions.

Networking

The programme is multi-faceted in order to give different perspectives on leadership in the early stage of their leadership careers. Formal and informal networking provides insights into other colleagues' experiences and school culture when participants may only have a single school experience.

Facilitation

Each session is facilitated by a pair of leaders using a range of strategies to challenge, inspire, engage and inform.

Coach or in-school support

The programme recommends the role of a coach or a colleague in-school who is able to listen and respond to the learning process and to help participants to apply their learning in their day-to-day workplace.

The planning group acknowledges that high quality coaching is not the norm in schools and from MLDP the lesson learned was that we could not control what happens in other schools and the coaching experience was variable. We decided to recommend that participants engaged in a professional dialogue with someone who could give them quality time.

Communication

Each participant receives a folder which is an important sign of the expectations of their involvement in a learning process over time. The continuity of learning is essential and the Assistant Head e-mails participants after each session to say thank you and to give the headlines from that session and the intersessional tasks. They know the Assistant Head is the individual they can identify as having



oversight of the programme. Two administrators support all aspects of the programme and liaise with participants on behalf of the Assistant Head.

Reflection on progress

During the final session when participants are presenting the findings of their enquiry they are asked to reflect on their leadership progress in relation to the qualities and behaviours and the development points they identified in session one. Some participants find it difficult to articulate the changes to their leadership and talk about leadership in terms of task completion.

Evaluation

A variety of evaluations are used: post it notes at the end of each session 'What went well, even better if', discussion with individuals during sessions and an electronic summative evaluation sent in May. Returns were very low: 4 out of 23. 100% agreed that the programme had challenged their thinking and had given them ideas to implement in their leadership role.

Cohort 2 2014-2015

As a result of direct observation and feedback the Assistant Head has made small changes to the programme modules, including some of the personnel leading sessions. Changes will be made to the evaluation process to formalise the individual session responses as well as the summative document. Most of the programme remains unchanged for Year 2.

Appendix 1

Cohort 1 2013-2014

- 23 participants 14 secondary; 1 special (secondary) ; 8 primary
- All sessions facilitated as cross phase apart from session 3 where participants looked at data relevant to phase.
- Attendance was good overall: 100% for sessions 1 and 2 and between 80-90% for the other sessions.

Cohort 2 2014-2015

The application window is still open. Of the 15 applications received the following information has been collated and there is no difference between secondary and primary responses. The average number of years in teaching is 3. The Learning Statement requests responses to 3 questions, including headteacher/line manager's statement.

Question 1 In what ways are you looking beyond the classroom? How will the programme help you?

Question 2 How do you know you are ready for the next level of leadership?

Question 3 to be written by the headteacher/senior member of staff – In what ways do you think the programme will help with their leadership growth?

Q1	Q2	Q3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Expansion of skills and knowledge -Confidence as a teacher has grown -Taking on more responsibility -Developing self; self-awareness -Leading a team -Analysis of data -Communicating with others/influencing others -Challenge own learning -Increase whole school awareness -Influence whole school policy -Impact on children's learning -Manage workload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Very organized -Development beyond the classroom -Growth in confidence as teacher -Observation feedback; high quality teaching -Interpersonal skills -Recent whole school role; more responsibility -Committed to teaching and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strategic thinking -Holding other people to account Confidence -Leadership relationships -Variety of stakeholders -Coaching skills -Resilience -Difficult conversations -Wider context -Completion of a project Supporting inexperienced colleagues

Appendix 2

Core texts: Professor John West Burnham 'Leadership of teaching and learning – closing the gap' and Geoff Southworth's 'Learning centred leadership'.

Resources mentioned which are available if you need them:

Hampshire Qualities and Behaviours referenced on page 3

Future Change Makers evaluation 2014

Summative evaluation sent electronically