A partnership event for leaders, practitioners and learners at all levels and in all contexts from Scotland’s Creative Learning Plan Partners and the National Creative Learning Network
Aims of the session

• To explore what we mean by ‘creative leadership’ in education.
• To reflect on recent inspection findings to identify cultural features which facilitate creative leadership and lead to improved outcomes for children and young people.
• To consider the place of creative leadership in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic as a period of significant change.
• To offer reflective questions to support school staff/practitioners to consider their approaches to creative leadership.
“Learning leadership demonstrates creativity and often courage: Innovating, designing, bringing others on board and redesigning all call on the exercise of creativity, and often courage. Deep shifts in mindset and practice and the capacity to keep the long-term vision in view are needed when the aim is transformation, even if the starting point may be incremental. The leadership focus is on deep changes to practice, structures and cultures.”

What does creative leadership mean to you?

Word cloud produced when participants were asked to enter two or three words that they thought of when hearing the term creative leadership.
What is creative leadership?

“Creative leadership is an imaginative and thought through response to opportunities and to challenging issues that inhibit learning at all levels. It's about seeing, thinking and doing things differently in order to improve the life chances of all students. Creative leaders also provide the conditions, environment and opportunities for others to be creative.

Creative leadership is not just about problem solving...it also involves 'problem finding’ or identification; actively scanning the environment for challenges which, if not addressed now, could derail improvement efforts or prevent schools from engaging in more radical change as they strive to prepare their students for the future. Often these might be seen as opportunities.”

Creativity Skills

Curiosity
- Registering patterns and anomalies
- Making use of previous knowledge
- Formulating good questions

Open-mindedness
- Using lateral and divergent thinking
- Hypothesising
- Exploring multiple viewpoints
- Being flexible, adaptable and functioning well with uncertainty
Creativity Skills

Imagination
• Exploring, synthesising and refining multiple options
• Generating and refining ideas
• Inventing

Problem Solving
• Understanding and defining problems
• Crafting, delivering and presenting solutions
• Demonstrating initiative, discipline, persistence and resilience
• Evaluating impact and success of solutions
• Identifying and implementing next steps in refinement or development
Self-evaluation to support the creative leader

The virtuous cycle of improvement

Inwards, outwards and forwards

For Scotland’s learners, with Scotland’s educators
What does HGIOS?4 say about creativity in Q.I. 1.3?

Q.I. 1.3: Leadership of change

Level 5 illustration: Implementing improvement and change
• Practitioner enquiry and creative approaches are integral to the thinking and practice of staff, pupils and partners.

Features of highly effective practice:
• Senior leaders create conditions to support creativity, innovation and enquiry.
• Opportunities for learners and staff to regularly engage in critical and creative thinking are embedded.

Challenge questions:
• How effective are we in nurturing creativity and innovation?
The journey to success for a creative leader...

What people think it looks like

What it really looks like
Potential challenges to overcome in creative leadership

“Changing the shared ways of thinking and acting that give shape, direction, and momentum to organizations is one of the great challenges faced by leaders.”

Potential challenges to overcome in creative leadership

• The balance of bureaucracy
  o The outcomes are not established or measured effectively.
• Good enough?
  o Complacency leads to a reluctance to strive for better.
• Looking backwards, not forwards
  o It does not match with the shared aims and/or beliefs of the establishment.
• Better, not just different
  o It does not lead to school improvement.
• False freedoms
  o Depending on how it is led, some may feel it is “being done” to them or may not feel ready for change. The approaches are not embedded in a consistent or agreed manner.
Looking at the evidence...what did we do?

• We reviewed inspection evidence from 2018-2020, focusing on schools who achieved a grading of very good or excellent for QI 1.3: Leadership of Change.
• These included:
  • 16 Early learning and childcare centres
  • 28 Primary schools
  • 8 Secondary schools
  • 5 Special schools
  • 2 Independent schools

• We looked for common features of schools in their approaches to leadership of change. The following conditions featured in all or almost all of these schools.
• We identified four conditions relating to school culture which prepare a school community for the implementation of change.
A focus on developing vision, values and aims which are constructed, understood and owned by all members of the school community.

All of the school community have the opportunity to contribute to improvement. A focus on developing empowerment with staff having the support and autonomy to take forward priorities.

A strong understanding of the school’s individual context based on reliable and relevant evidence including data. A focus on improvement planning where ambitious goals with measurable outcomes are created.

A focus on developing a culture of collegiate and partnership working to foster improvement.

Conditions to foster creative leadership
For Scotland’s learners, with Scotland’s educators

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For Scotland’s learners, with Scotland’s educators
A focus on developing vision, values and aims which are constructed, understood and owned by all members of the school community.

- All practitioners have a clear understanding of, and commitment to the values of the setting.
  Mid Calder Primary School – Nursery
- The school and nursery have recently reviewed and refreshed their vision, values and aims to reflect their context and place in the community. Practitioners and children demonstrate the values in their daily interactions.
  Springfield Primary School – Nursery
- The school is adept at connecting their values, wellbeing indicators and children’s rights. This is a major strength of the school. In particular, the children’s knowledge and understanding of these three areas is very strong, as is their ability to make connections to all other areas of school life and learning.
  Lanark Primary School
- Changes are guided by, and responsive to, the school’s vision, values and aims. Implementing these improvements has had the effect of reinforcing the school’s unique identity, and also supporting its claim to place young people’s needs at the heart of its business.
  Graeme High School
- The headteacher has consulted very effectively with young people and their families, partners and the wider community to develop the school’s vision, values and aims. The aspirational vision and aims is focussed on meeting the changing complex needs of young people.
  Ashton Secondary School
A focus on developing vision, values and aims which are constructed, understood and owned by all members of the school community.
A strong understanding of the school’s individual context based on reliable and relevant evidence including data. A focus on improvement planning where ambitious goals with measurable outcomes are created.

- The headteacher and extended leadership team have developed rigorous approaches to planning for continuous improvement ensuring that time is protected for professional dialogue. East Plean Primary School
- The headteacher is highly skilled at presenting and interrogating formative and summative data. She works closely with senior leaders and teachers to build up a clear plan for improvement. Strathdevon Primary School
- The headteacher and staff have used a wide range of information, including the use of locality data, to ensure the overall vision is both aspirational and relevant to the school and community. St Mary’s Primary School
- All staff have a clear understanding of the social and cultural context of the school and can refer to this data easily to inform their classroom planning. Key to planning for continuous improvement is the school’s robust faculty review process. North Berwick High School
- The headteacher provides very strong, highly effective and supportive leadership. Together with her senior leaders, she has led and managed change sensitively and successfully. Their use of analysis of evidence and data, consultation with stakeholders and clear communication are key features of the school’s change process. Aberdeen Grammar
A strong understanding of the school’s individual context based on reliable and relevant evidence including data. A focus on improvement planning where ambitious goals with measurable outcomes are created.
All of the school community have the opportunity to contribute to improvement. A focus on developing empowerment with staff having the support and autonomy to take forward priorities.

- Children are **fully included in planning** what they would like to see in their setting. The ‘super committee’ of older children represent their peers by putting forward ideas. **Peek a Boo Nursery**
- The leadership team is developing a **culture of trust and autonomy** to encourage teachers to **adopt new approaches, take measured risks and develop creativity and innovation** across the system. This approach to empowerment is growing effectively. **Balderneck Primary**
- The headteacher encourages her staff to be **creative, innovative and to use practitioner enquiry** to influence change processes. **Wellshot Primary school**
- The senior leadership team have also **created and fostered an enabling culture** for staff who wish to develop further their own practice. Under this leadership, staff are empowered to lead at all levels in the development of new approaches and initiatives. **Coal Primary School**
- The school is rightly proud of its **sector-leading programme of career-long professional learning** (CLPL). Senior and middle leaders use Professional Review and Development to agree CLPL needs, linked to improvement planning. **St. Ninian’s High School**
All of the school community have the opportunity to contribute to improvement.

A focus on developing empowerment with staff having the support and autonomy to take forward priorities.
A focus on developing a culture of collegiate and partnership working to foster improvement.

- Staff are very **outward looking and regularly use research** to support improvements. Examples include small tests of change, research with university partners and practitioner enquiry...Staff share their learning with colleagues within school and across schools in the local authority. Staff are **benefiting from developing partnerships across the Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative (TRIC)**, including shared professional learning. **Inchture Primary School**

- She [the headteacher] works collaboratively with the Parent Council and the wider parent forum. She **encourages and supports parents and partners to be involved in the life of the school and in decision-making.** **Kirkbean Primary**

- Children who access nurture support **presented to school staff, and senior leaders from the local authority**...A group of children recently spoke at an international conference on leadership. **Southwood Primary**

- All teachers take responsibility for developing aspects of their department’s work or whole school priorities. This includes a few teachers who have successfully led whole school developments. They are now **supporting the development of colleagues in the school, in associated primary schools and across the local authority** in wellbeing and learning, teaching and moderation approaches. Partners contribute very well to the ethos and aims of the school. **Most partners express a strong commitment to ensuring positive outcomes for young people.** **Belmont Academy**
A focus on developing a culture of collegiate and partnership working to foster improvement.

Watch video ‘Glenlivet Primary School - Success is for all of us’ on YouTube at: https://youtu.be/qDedcSw15Ug
Creative leadership in the here and now...

Real change often takes place in deep crises, and this moment holds the possibility that we won’t return to the status quo when things return to “normal”. While this crisis has deeply disruptive implications, including for education, it does not have predetermined outcomes. It will be the nature of our collective and systemic responses to these disruptions that will determine how we are affected by them.

The dedication of professionals involved in supporting recovery has been a central feature of system leadership. We’ve seen real strength in leadership in a crisis, demonstrating a real resilience and showing adaptive leadership responses that reflect a context as it evolves.


*Education Scotland (2020), What Scotland Learned, Education Scotland Publication, Scotland*
Creative leadership in the here and now...
Creative leadership in a time of significant change and challenge…
‘National overview of practice in remote learning’ documents

Reflective Questions

• In what ways have creative leadership in your context driven change and improvement?
• Are there any of the conditions which foster creative leadership which you feel require further development within your school?
• Are there any other conditions which you feel merit consideration to support creative leadership?
• How are the school’s vision, values and aims considered in decision making and future improvement priorities?
• Do your systems for self-evaluation and school improvement planning support a focus on achieving measurable and sustained outcomes for young people?
• How are senior leaders embedding a culture of empowerment which offers support, through high quality professional learning and other approaches, as well as autonomy to foster leadership across the community?
• To what extent are staff given the opportunity to collaborate and work collegiately with others, both in and out with the school? What impact does this have and how do you measure the impact?
• How are partnerships fostered to allow creative approaches to be developed throughout the school?
• How has your school community shown creative leadership at all levels during the Covid-19 pandemic?
• What have you, as school leaders, learned about your school community during the pandemic?

Any feedback on the presentation would be appreciated: https://forms.office.com/r/5PQgeBA4wV