**Aspiring to Middle Leadership**

**Introductory session transcript**

Slide 1 **Lesley Walker** 0:13  
Welcome to Aspiring to Middle Leadership.  
My name's Lesley Walker and I'm a Lead Specialist with the Professional Learning and Leadership team at Education Scotland.

**Iain McDermott** 0:23  
And my name is Ian McDermott and I'm also one of the Lead Specialists at the PLL Directorate here in Education Scotland.

Slide 2 **Lesley Walker** 0:31

Thanks very much for joining us for this recorded session. It should take around about half an hour and we'll move on now to look at what we'll cover in this recorded session. So, we'll introduce the Education Scotland Aspiring to Middle Leadership programme for you. We'll take a look at the roles of middle leadership that are explored through the programme.  
And we will familiarise with the programme ahead, so that will include:

* how to engage with the programme
* how to register an account with Education Scotland, to access the materials
* how to use the PLAs or Professional Learning Activities on the roles of middle leadership
* we'll look at some tools to help you plan your learning
* and we’ll take some time on the PLAs that cover inclusion, well-being and equalities
* there'll be some information on how to complete the programme and receive a certificate, if that if that's what you choose to do
* and we'll briefly look at some supports for your learning as well, and next steps
* and of course all importantly how to get started on the programme.

Slide 3

**Lesley Walker** 1:27

So the aims of aspiring to middle leadership:  
Leading your own learning, you will increase your knowledge of recent and emerging research, adding the rules of middle leadership.  
You'll spend some time inquiring into your own strengths and your areas for development as an aspiring or a new middle leader.  
We hope that you will increase your knowledge and understanding of the roles of middle leadership as seen in the research and some of the skills and abilities that are required to carry out key aspects of these roles.  
And finally, you'll increase your knowledge and understanding of an aspect of wellbeing, inclusion or equalities in the second part of the programme, with a view to leading change in this area.

Slide 4 **Iain McDermott** 2:20  
So the national model of professional learning describes the main principles and features of effective learning, and it's something that's at the heart of all of the professional learning that we deliver here at Education Scotland. These can help to build capacity and promote those collaborative practises and Aspiring to Middle Leadership has been designed using this model and the principles of adult learning, or andragogy. If you want to explore more about the model, please use the QR code that you can see here on screen.  
We'll just briefly describe the model and why it's so important, and the different parts of it. The heart, or the centre of the model, the professional learning in this programme, should impact on you as educators and, in turn, impact on your learners. All effective professional learning links the educators learning with that of children and young people or adult learners that you work with, and you will be in the role of a learner in this programme too. Now, the next three elements in green, you can see here, describe learning as collaborative, learning by enquiring and learning that deepens knowledge and understanding, and these are very, very important aspects as well, not just about the type of learning that you're going to engage in through AML, but also the learning that you will experience too and how that will impact on others. The programme is linked to professional standards and whether that is the General Teaching Council for Scotland, the GTCS, the Standard for Middle Leadership, which is specifically part of those standards, the Triple SC (SSSC) Codes of Practice, the Standard for Childhood Practice, or the Community Learning and Development standards. All of these are linked closely to the national model. And lastly, leadership and for learning is about creating a culture of learning in a setting, with everyone playing a part in creating that ethos, not just the leadership teams. And we would ask at this point is there anything that resonates with you, at this point, looking at the model and if so, why? You may want to pause this video for a second to make some notes, if you wish.

Slide 5

**Iain McDermott** 4:27

So this is a connector activity and it's an activity to bring you into the space where you're thinking about the roles of middle leadership. It will hopefully connect you to the learning, prepare and motivate you to engage in it. If you're joining the programme as part of a group, you may wish to try this activity together. If not, take some time to reflect on these questions and make some notes if you wish to.

Slide 6

**Lesley Walker** 4.55  
A theoretical model of middle leadership- the roles of middle leaders.  
John De Noble, based at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia, undertook research with middle leaders in schools to draw out the key roles of the job and find out what influences are brought to bear on middle leaders and what impacts middle leaders might have.  
And what you can see on the slide here are the six roles that he identified in 2017.  
The student focused role concerns instances when middle leaders are dealing with learner issues that are not related to other roles.  
Examples of activity in this area include teaching, helping learners with learning issues, dealing with any of the learner's problems, and addressing the wellbeing needs of learners.  
Administration. This concerns the development of procedures and putting them in place so that a variety of tasks can be carried out by staff members and the organisational role can be executed effectively.  
The ultimate goal of the administration role is efficient use of time and resources, so this will include the organisation of systems such as files and databases for the keeping of records relating to a variety of things ranging from purchases right through to learner achievement.  
The middle leader will often develop these systems, or they'll do it as part of a team, or they may engage the school administration staff to help support them producing the necessary resources.  
The organisational role has to do with the organisation of physical and human resources, or people, through tasks that help schools to achieve their goals and objectives.  
Coordination of people and materials is the main activity here and it will also involve things like timetabling, planning, executing and implementing a range of programmes, events and activities.  
So these are increasingly collaborative tasks with others in a team, department  
or a working group.  
The organisational role also requires middle leaders to collect data on learner achievement through the monitoring of assessment, which can provide the basis for work in the other roles.  
The supervisory role involves the monitoring and evaluating of performance of staff and the focus here is on monitoring and feeding back on the practice of individuals that you support or you line manage and maybe also the quality of their work.  
This role suggests that middle leaders might be required to assess teachers, but in some studies, middle leaders definitely preferred a softer, more collegial notion of supervision, where performance was maybe discussed rather than observed or measured.  
The supervisory role links to the staff development one, when these discussions may extend to professional learning like courses, coaching conversations or other activities to address knowledge gaps or to improve skills.  
The staff development role. Now this concerns the building of capacity and competence of staff members so that they can do their jobs effectively, and this role is carried out in several ways. The simplest acts are offerings of encouragement, praise or support for the work being done, the aim of which is to keep teachers and other staff motivated and help them develop their abilities and reach their potential.  
Another well-known way to carry out the staff development role is to lead by example.  
Middle leaders are often regarded as effective teachers and role models, often reaching their position in the first place because of their capacity to lead by example and they might enhance their reach as role models by letting other staff members observe them; they might provide advice to teachers and other educators; they might mentor or coach their colleagues in a subject area, or they might simply work the way that they want their colleagues to work.  
Middle leaders have also been observed to organise and facilitate professional learning for other educators based on their particular expertise.  
And finally to the strategic role. This primarily concerns vision forming and goal setting and acquiring the resources to achieve these and middle leaders are increasingly being asked to develop a vision for their area of responsibility. And this means that they must also try and persuade those within that area to buy in and to work towards that vision.  
Collaborative styles of leadership that cultivate positive and trusting relationships are obviously going to be useful. Especially we are teaching practices might need to change.  
The strategic role also involves motivating and persuading others to follow a particular policy line, perhaps, or get involved in implementing new ideas.  
This role is likely to be much easier to carry out if middle leaders are good developers, supervisors, administrators and managers, because in that way they're creating the optimal conditions for influence and change.

The larger theoretical model that De Nobile devised in 2017, suggests that middle leadership roles are at the very centre of what these very important people do and their potential impacts on school effectiveness and other settings’ effectiveness through their influence on the quality of teaching and learning.  
If you're a registered teacher with the GTCS, you can find the full article and references, look for *The Roles of Middle Leaders in Schools: Developing a Conceptual Framework for Research*, De Nobile, 2017, via EBSCO, which you can find in ‘My GTCS’.  
What are your thoughts about these roles? Do they ring true for you in relation to what you know about middle leadership? Are there any surprises? Again, you might want to note down any thoughts you have on these roles at this point.

Slide 7

**Lesley Walker 10:54**

OK, this slide shows De Nobile's theoretical model as he envisaged it, with the six roles shown there. I'm trying to demonstrate that they're distinct, but they're still interrelated, so SF is student focused, AD is administration OR is organisational, SU is supervisory, SD staff development and ST strategic.  
And a few notes for you here on the model: Managing and Leading are shown in the model as distinct, but very much complementary, and the middle leadership role involves aspects of both.  
The ‘INPUTS’ that you can see to the left of the model; these are the influences, I suppose, on middle leaders that can either support them or in some cases maybe hinder them in their roles, but hopefully support them. And because this is obviously from Australia, when De Nobile talks about Principal Support, we would take that as Head Teacher or Team Leader or Line Manager, or that person who's in in a lead role within your organisation.  
On the left again, ‘Knowledge of C, P and A’ - that stands for Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment, and it's worth remembering at this point that this research was carried out in schools. But it is, we feel, strongly relevant to other education settings as well.  
John De Nobile included ‘Other??’ with a couple of question marks at different parts within this model because he acknowledged as part of the research that it wasn't an exhaustive list.  
Now to the right hand side of the model you can see ‘OUTPUTS’ and these are the impacts that middle leaders can have. So teaching quality, teacher attitudes, student outcomes, absolutely central and there will be others too.  
The ‘HOW?’ that you can see in the middle of the model, well, these are the skills and behaviours that are demonstrated by middle leaders in carrying out their roles.  
Now, after this research in 2017, we were really lucky at Education Scotland because John De Nobile worked with some Scottish middle leaders through our own *Middle Leaders Leading Change* programme, and those teachers here in Scotland identified some additional roles to these six. These were: one that they called external liaison, and this concerns interaction with third parties like visiting specialists, social workers and facilitating work experience and interacting with employers or universities.  
The last role that they identified with staff health and wellbeing, and this concerns the way in which middle leaders might support or look after staff’s, you know, health issues, mental and physical health issues, and other aspects of staff inclusion and wellbeing.  
Further learning on the model is included when you get to the Introductory Activities for AML and we'd ask you at this point to maybe again, note down any thoughts you have about this model:  
What might be the other inputs that might influence on how middle leaders carry out their roles and what might be the other outputs or impacts? What might be the other aspects of how?  
Again, take a little time to pause the recording if you wish, and make a few notes.

Slide 8 **Iain McDermott** 14:25  
So let's move away from the models of leadership now and towards you as a leader. Reflecting on your own professional ‘why’ will help you remember why you educate and get you thinking about what kind of leader you want to become.  
Here's the view of Jeffrey Boakye, author and education commentator, on why he teaches and what he feels education is for. Read the quote out and invite reflections on these questions as you're thinking about it. What is your why? Why do we educate? What's education for? And why aspire to lead? And yet again, you may want to make some notes if you like.

Slide 9 **Iain McDermott 15:04**

Your ‘how’ is also very important. Your skills, your experiences, your knowledge, abilities, attitudes, values and unique qualities all matter. Here are another couple of quotes that might tell us something about how to lead in education and how to be as a leader: the importance of authenticity and modelling to learners how to be a lifelong learner. So, two here from Santiago Rincon Gallardo and from Andy Hargreaves.  
The professional standards and values you use also help you with the why and the how, so it'll be useful to check in with them from time to time as you proceed through the AML programme.

Something else now for you to reflect on. Middle leaders have a wide sphere of influence….

Slide 10 **Iain McDermott 15:53**

Doctor Kylie Lipscombe, Associate Professor in Educational Leadership at the University of Wollongong, Australia, describes middle leaders as key brokers of change and improvement. Professor Andy Hargreaves, in his book *Leadership from the Middle*, describes leading from the middle as a privilege of being in a place where real change can be made. The middle is something seen the middle is sometimes seen. [Oh, stop, pause. That's fine. Another one for you to note.]  
The middle is sometimes seen as the bridge between practice and senior leadership team and this can both be an opportunity and a challenge. For Hargreaves, the middle isn't a hierarchical placemarker, but more like being right in the thick of things where the action is and where your influence can be both far reaching and lasting.  
So, thinking of the ripples spreading outwards from this drop of water, who do you reach? Where are your spheres of influence as an aspiring leader?

Slide 11

**Lesley Walker** 17:15  
Ok, we’re going to move on from that piece of reflection now to the learning ahead, and talk you through what's expected of you on the programme. So the first  
part of this is registering an account with the Education Scotland website. Now you may have one already, but if you don't, it's easy to do.  
At our website there is a suite of self-directed professional learning activities which we call PLAs, and these are interactive learning materials that allow you to write responses and reflections to prompts to save your progress as you go along and to keep a record of your learning.  
The Aspiring to Middle Leadership programme uses specific of these PLAs. They're really good because you can download a summary of your learning at the end of each one. Now, because the information that you complete within your PLAs can only be accessed by you and you can save it as you go along, this means you need to register an account so that you can login and access your PLAs where you left off. So to register using either a work e-mail or a personal e-mail, you need to go to education.gov.scot and go into the Professional Learning tab that you can see on the screen shot here, and just click on the purple register button that you can see on the right hand side next to that big yellow arrow. Now this will bring up a short registration form for you to complete, and it just includes a few basic details about you and your role in education sector. Once you've registered and created a password for yourself, you will then have access to the PLAs that you're going to need to do the Aspiring to Middle Leadership programme.

Slide 12

**Lesley Walker** 19:04

Once you've got your account set up, the next step will be to engage with the programme. So we'll take a look at the next steps.  
The Aspiring to Middle Leadership programme is self-directed, by you, through the website. As we said, you'll be able to find the Introductory Activities at the page shown here in the Aspiring to Middle Leadership wedge web pages. So again, once you've logged in, go to education.gov.scot, into the Professional Learning tab, click on Professional Learning Programmes and you'll be able to find AML in the programme list there.  
The programme consists of, firstly, four short Introductory Activities that you can find at the page shown on the slide here. Once you've done the four Introductory Activities, you'll move on to the self-directed learning using the PLAs.  
Now there are a range of PLAs that you can choose. So to help you select the best learning for you, there's going to be a self-evaluation activity using a self-evaluation wheel.  
That's part of the Introductory Activities and that will help you select the PLAs that you want to take forward.  
If you want to, you can use the Reflective Journal throughout the programme and a template is there for you to use within the web pages. You can use your own version. It's entirely up to you.  
And finally, you can complete the programme and apply for certification, and we'll say a little bit more about that on the slides to come.

Slide 13

**Lesley Walker** 20:50

Now, I mentioned the self-evaluation activity about how to plan your learning. So this slide shows the self-evaluation wheel activity which is part of the AML Introductory Activities, and the learning you choose will be determined by this activity as you'll select your PLAs based on the outcomes of this.  
So you can see here that each item around the edge of the wheel is one of the eight roles of middle leadership, so- student-focused, administration, organisational, supervisory, staff development, strategic, external liaison and staff health and wellbeing, and you'll remember those last two were identified later in the Scottish research.  
Now each one of these eight has a corresponding PLA.  
We've always found a self-evaluation wheel can be a really valuable tool in supporting yourself evaluation, because with a blank one with empty spaces in these boxes you can add in whatever you like. You can put in the Standards for Middle Leadership. You can use values or standards from your own code of practice. You can choose aspects of wellbeing, you can use them with learners and with colleagues. So it's a really flexible tool.  
Using a wheel like this can help you to explore your current reality, and it can help you critically reflect on yourself as a professional and on your practice.  
It can support you to create clarity about the areas of learning that you need to focus on, and perform a simple gap analysis about where you are now and where you might like to be. You can use it independently or if you want to use it with others, it can be part of a professional dialogue.  
Now, if you decide to use the Reflective Journal, you'll find an interactive version of this, inside there. But there's a blank downloadable copy as well, if you prefer to use that.  
The idea of this activity, when you come to do it, is that you score yourself on each row between zero and 10 and you mark across each row, where zero represents having no confidence or skills or experience of having tried out any aspects of these rules. I sincerely doubt that you will find yourself at zero on any of these, in fact, I know that you won't, but ten represents where you feel like you've got lots of confidence, you've had lots of experience and you've got many skills, in this particular area.  
And we know that past participants on the programme have found this really useful and help us helping them to focus their learning. They've also found it helpful to revisit it at a later stage, maybe six months or a year down the line, and replot the points, to see how far they've come.  
So what do you think of this wheel as a tool to support your learning? You might consider how you might use it with colleagues or even learners. And again, you can pause here if you like to make a few notes. But once you've completed the wheel as part of the introductory activities, that's you're ready to start on perhaps two of the PLAs.  
Doesn't have to be the ones that you have the lowest scores on. It can be any of them. The ones you're most interested in, or the ones that you feel you need to focus on.

Slide 14

**Lesley Walker** 24:13

OK, so the next step, as we said, is to delve into the roles of middle leadership, PLAs and you'll find the links to the eight of these activities once you're logged into your account.  
Each PLA should take somewhere between two to three hours and is broken up into learning steps that you can save as you go along and that you can do in kind of bite sized chunks. There are reflective questions at the end of each PLA, and each one ends with an impact step which gets you to reflect upon what you think the impact of your learning has been, or will be. And again, a wee reminder that you can download a pdf summary of your PLA at the end.  
If you want to use the Reflective Journal, you might decide to record your thoughts at the end of each PLA. That might be a helpful time to use the Journal.  
A suggested time frame for completing two PLAs, as is a term roughly. But if you're working as part of a group, you might want to decide on a time frame for completion together. You may work wish to work more quickly or take it over a longer time.  
So how are you feeling about the learning now? Do you have any hopes, concerns, questions? Make some notes of these again if you want to.

Slide 15

**Lesley Walker** 25:37

This next slide is really Part 2 of the programme.  
Because the focus in the first stages is on the roles of middle leadership, but then we move on to think about inclusion, wellbeing and equalities. And this slide shows the national framework for inclusion well-being inequalities, which takes in relationships, wellbeing and care, inclusion and rights and equalities, with various priorities and drivers, pieces of legislation, professional support and policy, strategies and approaches, all feeding into this, and as you get into the learning on this area, you'll find out more about all of these. The plan is that you will choose two further PLAs from a list on inclusion, wellbeing and equalities themes. You'll find these PLAs listed at the Aspiring to Middle Leadership web pages, and you can make your selection this time based on the needs of your learners, on your setting’s improvement plan, on your own interests maybe, or if you've got a planned piece of work that's coming up, and find a PLA that might support that, by all means choose that one.  
So how are you feeling about the learning now? There's quite a lot here, but you have a long time to take it on, and you can very much do it to suit your own needs.  
Are there any aspects of inclusion, wellbeing and equalities that you're really interested in or that are really coming to the fore in your setting just now?  
Maybe make a note of that, if that's something you want to come back to and remember.  
So that's the learning involved in Aspiring to Middle Leadership.

Slide 16

**Iain McDermott** 27:22

Completion- Iain.Thank you. So once you've completed the AML introductory activities and the four PLAs in total, you have the option of submitting a completed Learning Summary to Education Scotland for certification. All the details of how to do this are on the AML website. Now, Learning Summaries will be reviewed by a member of the Education Scotland team to ensure they demonstrate learning from all aspects of the AML programme. There's no word count for the Learning Summary but as a guide it should be around one side of A4 in total.  
Remember you should not submit your Reflective Journal or PLA summaries. These are purely just for you, but they will help you to complete your Learning Summary. You should hear back from us within about eight weeks of submission and if you've not had a response within that time then you can contact us here at Education Scotland using the details provided.

Slide 17

**Iain McDermott** 28:20

Now, Lesley’s talked about reflective journalling, and you are encouraged to use a Reflective Journal to structure your engagement with the programme. And this is just for you. It doesn't need to be shared or submitted to Education Scotland. On this page here, it also points out how you may want to use a Peer Supporter, which can benefit both you and somebody else as well.  
A Peer Supporter will hold space for professional dialogue about your learning. It can provide an opportunity for more information, and for sharing and you can find more information about this on the AML webpages too. If you decide to work with a Peer Supporter, this could be someone who's also part of the programme, but it doesn't have to be. Your Peer Supporter can be a current middle leader or someone that you've an existing relationship with, so you do not need to be working in the same setting as well. And this slide sets out a proposed schedule of meetings that you may want to use as well. The suggested timings- maybe between 20 to 40 minutes.  
And these may change over the period of time that you're having them as well. So have a think about what you want from that Peer Supporter relationship. What might be the benefits of that for you, and who might be a good fit to support you in the learning? And you may want to take some notes at this, at that kind of beginning stage of your learning journey.

Slide 18

**Iain McDermott** 29:44

So the next steps really, hopefully you're feeling ready and hopefully this has provided some information. You may want to watch back through parts of this as well, but please also use the link or the QR code on the slides if you haven't already had a chance to look at the AML webpages content. You're also welcome to sign up for the online Middle Leadership Sharing the Learning event which will be in May. This is an opportunity to meet with others from across Scotland who have also taken part in the AML programme. You can share reflections on learning with them, and hear about their learning, too. And we'd love to see you there. Full details again, you can find on the AML web pages.

Slide 19 **Lesley Walker** 30:25  
OK, I think it just remains for us to say thank you for your engagement and the time you've spent watching this recording today. Myself, Ian and the whole team at Education Scotland wish you lots of luck for the learning ahead, and we hope that we may actually see you at the Sharing the Learning event in May.

**Iain McDermott** 30:46  
So thanks everyone and good luck with your learning and always remember there's plenty of support here at Education Scotland, if you want to ask us any questions, but we hope this session has been useful and thank you.  
There we go.