

learningrounds

LEARNING ROUNDS

OVERVIEW REPORT 2008 - 2011

INTRODUCTION

As part of the International Thought Leaders programme, established by the Scottish Government in 2005, Professor Richard Elmore spoke on the model of Professional Rounds at a national seminar in 2007. The seminar was attended by headteachers and other interested educators. The approach is based on the practice of “medical rounds” in hospitals which focuses on shared diagnosis and treatment responses to presenting symptoms and on self evaluation. His thinking was very positively received and as a consequence the National CPD Team in collaboration with SCSSA was invited by the Scottish Government to develop an approach which would be relevant to Scotland. In the education setting it is applied to teams of colleagues who observe learning experiences across the school or establishment and determine collegiate responses to systemic changes in practice, as well as personal reflection on their own practice and consideration of relevant CPD.

The report presents feedback from colleagues in relation to the relevance of Learning Rounds to the key themes of Curriculum for Excellence, ASL and GIRFEC and the related key areas of continuing professional development ; self-evaluation and building capacity It is also part of a suite of guidance and interim reports which can be sourced on the National CPD Team blog at <http://ltsblogs.org.uk/cpdteam/category/learning-rounds/>. An on-line Learning Rounds Community has also been established and will be developed during the course of the current session in collaboration with local authorities and schools.

NATIONAL PROFILE

24 local authorities have been or are currently directly engaging with the National CPD team on the delivery and development of Learning Rounds. It is likely that other authorities and schools will also be engaging with the approach, but the exact number of schools and establishments who have adopted the model is impossible to calculate as many educators have taken this forward without engagement with their local authority or with the National CPD Team. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that it is widely used across the country and that “word of mouth” has been a prime driver in its adoption.

The report has been informed by feedback from local authorities and schools including interviews with participating staff, from active engagement by the team with a range of educational establishments and from focus groups at local and national level over the period 2008 – 2011.

The flexibility of the Learning Rounds approach has allowed for its effective application in early years settings, special schools, mainstream primary and secondary and FE settings. It also has the potential to enhance the impact of collaborative working between establishments and support services by providing a means for focussed self-evaluation on a collegiate basis against a shared agenda with the key focus of building teacher capacity and improving pupil outcomes. The National CPD Team has had the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues as the approach has been developed, thereby informing our own learning and consequent guidance information.

LEARNING ROUNDS IN ACTION

Local authorities and establishments

Those local authorities and establishments who have engaged with Learning Rounds report that its success has come from the gains in collegial practice which have followed. Many have commented that engagement with the programme has helped to break down the isolation of practice that still is found in many schools. The focus on the learning experience of pupils has offered many participants real insight into their own practice and that of colleagues.

Some authorities have used Learning Rounds as a strategy to support system change more effectively across their schools, and to enhance and develop self-evaluation within schools and centres. Authorities have found that involvement in Learning Rounds has the potential to strengthen their strategy for CPD, with its particular emphasis on self and collegiate self-evaluation. They have found that this complements other aspects of school and authority support and challenge approaches.

“HMIe 2010 commented on consistency of approaches in L&T, quality of self-evaluation and feedback to colleagues and learners. Learning Rounds is one of many approaches addressing this feedback”

“To ensure a consistent approach in teaching across the stages within the school and to stimulate professional dialogue”

Teaching Scotland’s Future

Recommendation 33 proposes that *“ The balance of CPD activities should continue to shift from set- piece events to more local, team-based approaches which centre around self evaluation and professional collaboration, and achieve an appropriate blend of tailored individual development and school improvement”*

Learning Rounds meets that recommendation and the endorsement from participants confirms it is a very well received and productive approach to collegiate professional development at an individual, school and cluster level.

“Self evaluation by staff improving : use of language that focuses on learning and teaching improving”

“Great CPD especially with regard to improving self reflection, engaging in professional dialogue and sharing practice”

“Caused me to review my own practice”

“Increased awareness of my own practice”

“Allowed me to reflect on pupil/work/behaviour”

Learning Rounds and self-evaluation : building capacity

The relationship between Learning Rounds and self-evaluation at an individual and collegiate level is fundamental to the approach. It should not be misconstrued as a monitoring tool of individual teacher performance. The focus is always on the learning of the observers and how that can influence both their own professional

development and the corporate learning of their establishment or service by emphasising the collegiate nature of the exercise and the subsequent actions. It is critical for success, therefore, that colleagues whose classes are visited are volunteers and not identified by senior management. The approach is at its most potent when colleagues have the opportunity to experience both aspects of the process. This also allows colleagues to see the holistic nature of Learning Rounds and puts into context the reason why there is no personal feedback to colleagues, as there is traditionally with peer observation or SMT monitoring visits. Learning Rounds can complement and extend these important monitoring interventions, but it has a very different purpose.

Learning Rounds & Curriculum for Excellence

The high expectations in Curriculum for Excellence require a very robust and proactive approach to collegiate working within establishments, across sectors and with external partners to support all pupil aspirations. The universal intent of Curriculum for Excellence is reinforced in the expectations in the ASL legislation and GIRFEC.

Learning Rounds provides a process and promotes a culture in which colleagues can enhance and share their knowledge of the learning environment in their own establishment. That knowledge can then be applied to the collegiate management of learning experiences and the achievement of outcomes for children and young people as appropriate to their setting and potential.

The themes which have been the focus of Learning Rounds include implementation of AifL and Critical Skills; use of higher order questioning; independent learning; active learning; differentiation and pupil engagement.

The challenge of assessment in the context of Curriculum for Excellence is also a very relevant theme for the Learning Rounds approach as it can provide an insight into where skills and knowledge taught in a discrete

“All staff agreed that learning rounds are a great way to ensure a consistent approach in teaching across stages within the school”

“Helps to develop more active learning and engagement as outlined in CfE”

“All staff were engaged in high quality dialogue regarding how children learn, what we do well, what we should be doing, etc . to improve things”

area can be applied in another setting – allowing the child or young person to demonstrate they have achieved the outcome rather than the teacher has taught the required elements. Professional respect and trust is at the heart of Learning Rounds and both are essential to the effective delivery of CfE and the other key drivers of legislation and national policy.

There is also evidence from colleagues in schools and authorities that this has supported and enhanced the active engagement of pupils in inter-disciplinary learning. Teachers have reported a better understanding of how pedagogical approaches can deliver genuinely connected learning.

Learning Rounds, Distributive Leadership and PRD

The essential core of Learning Rounds is the collegiate nature of the activity in terms both of the observation process and the consequent “next steps” which are owned by the school community. Both represent distributive leadership in action as the activity is entrusted to and often led by others than the senior management team and the ensuing actions are agreed and owned by the whole school community, as are the achieved outcomes. It has proved to be an effective vehicle for, for example, Chartered Teachers to have a lead role in CPD activity.

“Headteacher timetabled the Learning Rounds and Chartered teachers ran the plenary sessions”

“LR group set up and led by an English teacher overseen by DHT”

“Staff engagement in the school improvement process has become more meaningful and staff input has been more focussed with a more professionally informed evaluation on the need for school improvements”

“Often staff feel that CPD is something that is done ‘to us’ that we listen at courses etc. Staff feedback indicates that staff felt in control of the direction of discussion and felt it to be one of the most worthwhile activities they had undertaken both for CPD but also in terms of school improvement”

In this context Learning Rounds also has a direct link to the PRD process. The experience of the CPD Team has been that educators sometimes struggle to identify their learning needs in the contexts of the Standard for Full Registration. The process of participating in a collegiate discussion about learning and teaching, and involvement in the collection of evidence of impact and discussion of next steps, are together helpful preparation for PRD. Participants have commented in discussion on the value of the experience in helping identify areas for their own CPD which can be considered at a PRD interview. This view was seen to be particularly relevant by the probationer teachers in the focus group.

Learning Rounds & Leadership

As has been indicated, the model is very supportive in developing a culture of collegiality and distributive leadership. It also has potential as a specific focus for PTs Curriculum and PTs Faculty as they engage with the challenge of ensuring a coherent approach to learning and assessment across the curriculum. A model of CPD for PTs CfE has been trialled in a large secondary school and will continue to evolve in collaboration with other schools over the current session. The approach explores the challenges of the role of Faculty PT using a coaching approach, the implications for individual and collegiate CPD and the avenues to address development needs. Learning Rounds provides the process by which the PTs gain a shared insight into the learning experiences across the school and the context in which to reflect on the evidence and collegiate response in terms of the next steps.

Learning Rounds & ASL : GIR : MCMC

Most recently the National CPD Team has been exploring the potential of the model in an inter-agency context. Work with individual establishments has been complemented by a national seminar which explored the experiences and potential of its application using an Appreciative Inquiry approach. The outcome of the seminar is attached as Appendix C. Comments from colleagues on the day of the seminar on the potential of Learning Rounds referred to the building of partner agency relationships, two way understanding and development of shared goals. In terms of benefits to the learner reference was made to improving the accuracy of expectations (and predictions) about outcomes for both staff and the learner. The benefits of the approach in terms of transitional planning has been recognised in the recently published "Report on implementation of school to post-school transitional planning for children and young people with additional support needs" [put in source](#)

In terms of individual establishments, engagement has involved specialist staff, psychological services and allied health professionals in mainstream schools with integrated support bases and special schools for severe and complex needs. The positive response from all colleagues who were involved has endorsed the efficacy of the approach : examples include a special school for severe and complex needs where school staff, psychological services and allied health professionals undertook Learning Rounds to explore the school's communication policy in practice. This resulted in a review of the current policy and a remodelling of the collaborative working arrangements with the aim of enhancing practice. It has also proved to be an effective means by which colleagues from a special school and neighbouring mainstream primary acquired a greater understanding of the range of pupil needs and related learning experiences in anticipation of developing a programme of collaborative learning for pupils. Both school staffs commented on how much more confident they felt to undertake joint planning.

In both these examples time was spent pre the Learning Rounds exploring the theme of distributive leadership and the implications for shared planning and responsibility across a diverse range of colleagues .

The possibility of piloting the model in a residential school for young people with social and emotional additional support needs is currently under active consideration.

Learning Rounds & Initial Teacher Training

The principle of the focus on the learning of the observer is being explored by the University of Glasgow School of Education and North Ayrshire Council. In essence it will provide a process by which tutors, school staff and students can collaborate "on site".

IMPACT

While involvement in Learning Rounds is a very positive experience in its own right and has implications for individual and collaborative CPD at an immediate level, its main objective is to influence collegiate practice and related CPD. The focus of any subsequent activity must have implications in relation to pupil gain over time. Involvement in Learning Rounds does not produce a “quick win” but it does lay the foundations for medium to long term planning which relates CPD activity to determined outcomes.

“Action points made from observations have allowed teachers to evaluate their existing techniques for AifL and also to evaluate how effectively they are monitoring and managing pace and challenge”

“The identification of whole school areas for improvement which will eventually lead to long-term impact on learner experiences”

“Staff involved now have a clearer understanding on the definition of Active Learning”

The post observation discussions and consequent consideration by the whole staff to consider “next steps” is therefore the most critical aspect of the process. It should result in an agreed prioritisation of action with related impact expectations. The nature of the impact and the relevant evidence is determined by the school community, which should also involve key stakeholders and partners (e.g., psychological services, allied health professionals, social work services) who were involved in the Learning Rounds.

Appendix B provides anonymised examples of Learning Rounds activity across a range of settings. The variety of means by which the observation data was recorded reflects the non-bureaucratic nature of the approach. There is no stylised documentation, reflecting again the ownership of the users rather than an externally imposed recording system which has the danger of being seen as inspectorial. The fact also that the anticipated impact from the actions taken has been determined by the school community gives an added incentive to monitor and realise the benefits.

Learning Rounds and system-wide change

While there is no doubt of the immediacy of impact in terms of observer learning both as a consequence of the observations and the post session discussions, the prize of sustainability and ongoing impact on pupil experience can still be elusive. There are a number of factors which contribute to this and the solution is as complex as the challenge. However, from the experiences to date, Learning Rounds does provide a means by which colleagues can form a more in depth and comprehensive understanding on a collegiate basis of the learning climate which children and young people are experiencing and seek to adopt more system wide approaches to deliver on CfE and other national priorities.

Recommended Next Steps

Education Scotland:

- review the current Toolkit, taking into account the feedback from colleagues on its use
- facilitate and develop the on-line LR community
- collaborate with one school and one authority to determine the potential for system wide change
- explore further the use of the model in a residential special school setting

- explore the feasibility of the model in a CLD context, focussed on partnership with schools

All of the above are currently under discussion or being actioned.

APPENDIX B

Anonymised Example: Primary

LAWRIE PRIMARY
LEARNING ROUNDS
1-3 FEBRUARY 2010

Context: 35 Learning Round **observations**
Nursery ⇔ P7 (Early/First & Second Levels)
Teams of 4 or 5 drawn at random from 21 colleagues + 2 National CPD Advisers

Theme: **Active Learning**

- Children’s awareness of the learning purpose
- Children’s self evaluation of progress
- Independent learning – self/pairs/groups
- Differentiation
- Personalisation
- Confident learners

Context: **HMIe follow up report**

- *Teachers could develop their skills further by observing each other’s practice*
- *Staff are at an early stage in seeking children’s views on how their learning might be improved*
- *Further steps need to be taken to develop children’s independence in learning*
- *A few more able children could be challenged more in their learning*

Lawrie S & Q Report and Improvement Plan

- *Develop children’s independence in learning*
- *Develop consistency in pupil experience in teaching and learning*
- *Challenge more able pupils*
- *Develop pupil experience in setting targets for learning*

In considering the evidence provided via the Learning Rounds activities it is essential to balance the observations against the range of learning experiences being undertaken and the knowledge already held in the school of children’s engagement. This will help inform the Next Steps which the school thinks most appropriate to continue to address the actions in the HMIe follow up and the School Improvement Plan.

It may also be helpful to refer to BC3 and BC5, e.g.,

BC3 *“Opportunities to achieve to the highest levels they can through appropriate personal support and challenge”*
“Gaining access to learning activities which will meet their needs”

BC5 *“The (assessment) evidence will be different depending upon the kind of learning being assessed, the learning activity and learners’ preferences about how to show what they have learned”*
For example, staff and learners could focus on the four capacities from time to time to discuss and evaluate evidence for the learner’s overall development and plan next steps in learning”

OBSERVATION SUMMARY

35 observations over 3 mornings
Nursery – P7

Theme	All	Most	Some	Few
Awareness of learning purpose <i>The vast majority in</i>	√			
Self/peer/group evaluation <i>Some children in</i>				√
Independent learning <i>Some children in</i>			√	
Differentiation Additional support needs <i>A few children in</i> Able pupils <i>A few children in</i>			√	√
Personalisation <i>A few children in</i>				√
Confident learners <i>Almost all children in</i>	√			
USE of AifL techniques <i>Most children in</i>		√		

NEXT STEPS

These were determined by the school, based on consideration of the evidence and other reference points. In essence the Learning Rounds approach anticipates impact at 3 levels:

- **Individual practitioner response** – immediate & reflective, e.g., there may be activities observed which the teacher wishes to incorporate into their own practice. There may be insights into how pupils' response in differing situations which can inform how the teacher relates to those children in the future.
- **Collegiate response** – e.g., departments or stage partners may reflect on professional development themes arising from the observations.
- **Systemic response** – the school as a whole identify a theme(s) which it would be appropriate to take forward as a learning community (community of practice).

POSTSCRIPT

Feedback from the school indicated that a full review of policy and practice in relation to the most able pupils was initiated, led by the Principal Teacher

Further Learning Rounds, orchestrated by the Chartered Teacher, were planned to look at the policy in action.

Anonymised Illustrative example: High School

BRADES HIGH SCHOOL
LEARNING ROUNDS 2009 – 2010

- CONTEXT:
- ✿ Implementation of Curriculum for Excellence BC3
 - ✿ School Improvement Plan -

Key Area 2 : Learners' experiences

- *cultivate an expectation of achievement through collaborative and independent learning*
- *use ICT resources effectively*
- *provide diverse contexts for learning*
- *provide rich and varied experiences and opportunities*
- *set personal and achievable targets*

Key Area 5 : Delivery of Education

- *provide stimulating and challenging experiences*
- *effective and varied learning and teaching experiences*
- *provide diverse contexts for learning*
- *greater holistic & relevant learning experiences with the 4 capacities being developed*
- *strategies used by pupils to aid their learning*
- *planning using TTL strategies*
- *consistency in approach*
- *pupils experience interdisciplinary activities develop core and transferable skills*

Key Area 9 : Develop People & Partnership / Lead Improvement

- *develop leadership capacity of all school leaders*
- *develop collaborative working practice*
- *develop team*
- *effective & varied teaching/learning strategies & formative assessment*
- *staff set realistic & challenging tasks experiences*
- *greater challenge and pace experienced*

THEME: ***"the students' participation in the learning process / Teacher – pupil interaction"***

FOCUS: S1 - S5 (practical & non-practical)

LEARNING ROUNDS ACTIVITY :

48 observations in 2009 over 4 days by teams of principal teachers, DHTs, educational psychologist, school librarian & QIO
24 observations in 2010 over 2 days by teams of teachers
24 observations later in 2010 over 1 day by teams of senior pupils

In considering the evidence provided via the Learning Round activities it is essential to balance the observations against the range of learning experiences being undertaken and the knowledge already held in the school of pupils' engagement. This will help inform the Next Steps which the school thinks most appropriate, in the context of CfE and the School Improvement Plan.

**BRADES HIGH SCHOOL
LEARNING ROUNDS ACTIVITY**

Learning Rounds
96 observations
S1 – S5

Teacher led

Pupil Involvement

- group
- pair
- solo
- whole class

Differentiation

- by task
- by response

Personalisation

Questioning

- open
- closed

Use of IT

- teacher
- pupil

Use of equipment

- teacher
- pupil

Resource Management

- teacher
- pupil

Assessment

- teacher
- peer/group
- self

Learner Confidence

Pupil awareness of learning activity

All	Most	Half	Some	Few	None
	√				
			√		
			√		
		√			
√					
				√	
√					
				√	
			√		
√					
	√				
			√		
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√					
	√				

Anonymised Illustrative example: Special School

TYROL SCHOOL
LEARNING ROUNDS
MARCH – MAY 2011

Context

Tyrol school provides education for children and young people aged 3 – 18 with complex needs. The school staff reflects teams of teachers, instructors, classroom assistants and special needs auxiliaries. Pupils are also supported by psychological services and allied health professional teams.

Following two CPD sessions with all staff in Tyrol to explore the implications and application of distributive leadership within a special school setting it was agreed by all colleagues, including partners in psychological services and speech and language therapy, to undertake a series of Learning Rounds with a particular focus on the theme of communication.

Rationale

Colleagues had the opportunity to gain an insight across a range of classes and learning situations to observe how systematically the school policy on communication was being practised and as a consequence consider if the current policy/practice remains appropriate to meeting the needs of the pupils in Tyrol. This included reflection, in joint discussion with speech and language therapy and psychological services, on the role of specialist services in continuing to enhance the capacity of school staff.

Focus

In discussion with the team of 9 colleagues who were involved in the first Learning Round in March the theme of communication was explored and the following elements of policy in practice were agreed:

Evidence of the use of verbal cues and symbols: Makaton : low and high tech augmentative communication aids

Evidence of pupil independence in the use of a range of communication approaches

Evidence of peer to peer engagement

Evidence of impact on learning – where appropriate (i.e., if the pupil is achieving a specific outcome at the time of the visit)

Evidence of pupil confidence

Impact on learning

The May observation team agreed the same areas of focus.

Approach

Colleagues on both days were in mixed observation teams of 3 (including speech and language therapy and psychological services) and visited a range of classes over the day, including outdoor play and leisure time. 46 observations in total were undertaken.

The summary data from the observations was collated following the debrief discussions which took place immediately after the observation schedules were completed.

The evidence was recorded in terms of:

In all/most/half/some/few observations we saw

Feedback

At the May in-service day a morning session to share the summarised data agreed the emerging themes and next steps.

**TYROL SCHOOL LEARNING ROUNDS
MAY 2011**

Over 46 observations we saw	None	Few	Some	Most	All
Verbal cues					✓
Physical cues					✓
Symbols					✓
- wall displays					✓
- concrete		✓			
- interaction					✓
Low tech aids					
- presence				✓	
- in use			✓		
High tech aids					
- presence				✓	
- in use				✓	
Independent use		✓			
Peer to peer					
- v				✓	
- p			✓		
Impact					✓

Next Steps

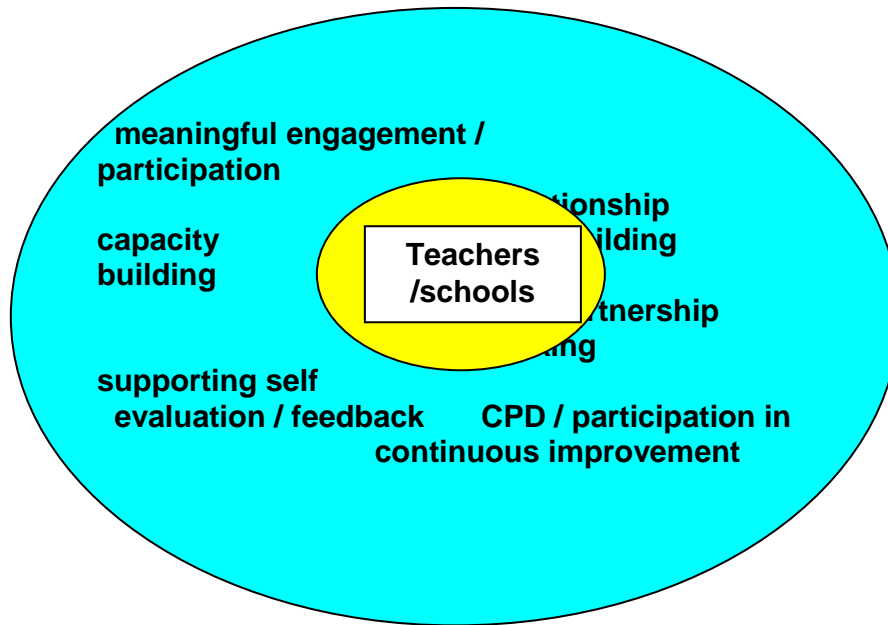
On the basis of the limited evidence of independent use by pupils of communication aids and approaches, the school community agreed to review practice as there was clearly over facilitation by adults . This included further discussion on the application of the terms “pace and challenge” vis a vis the time implications of pupils developing independent skills and the learning outcomes related to knowledge and activity being overtaken. Speech and Language and psychological service colleagues were very much part of the review process and subsequent responses.

Further Learning Rounds are scheduled for this session to maintain a collegiate over view of progress.

APPENDIX C

Appreciative Inquiry

Summary of Key Messages – potential benefits of Learning Rounds:



"helps undertake leadership role in a way that promotes 'distributive leadership'; provides opportunity for teachers to lead"

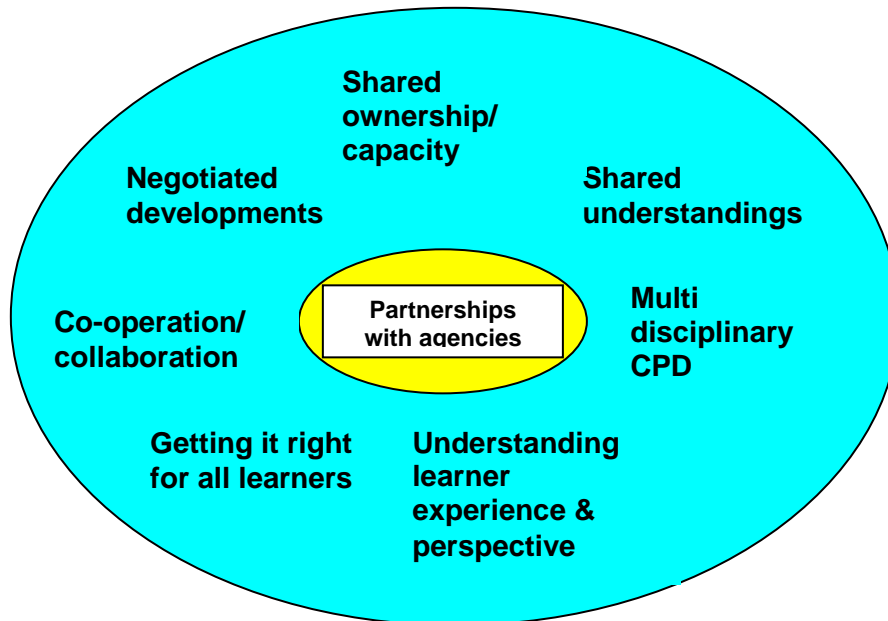
"puts teachers in control of their own learning"

"good to involve practitioners (class teachers) in improvement"

"the experience of learning rounds provides immediate personal professional development"

"LR is a project that ensures meaningful engagement of all participants; collegiate process is very powerful"

Appreciative Inquiry



"Developing shared vision/shared language"

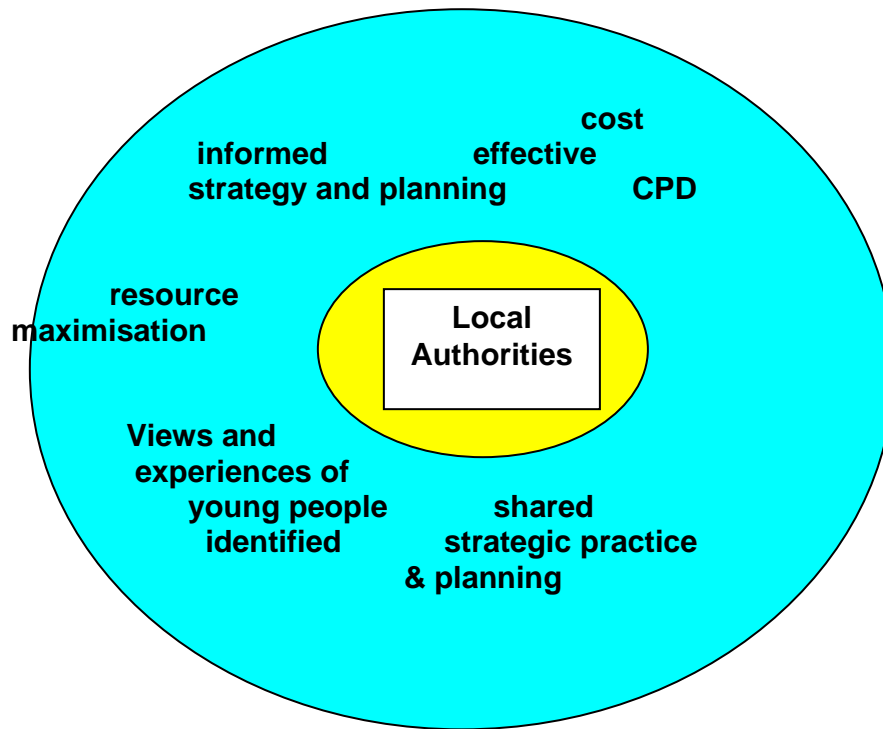
"Enhanced awareness of whole school environment"

"Potential to consider teachers undertaking Learning Rounds in other environments"

"Shared understanding of roles in the "real" world"

"Raised awareness of children/young people in different contexts"

Appreciative Inquiry



"Support ownership at local level"

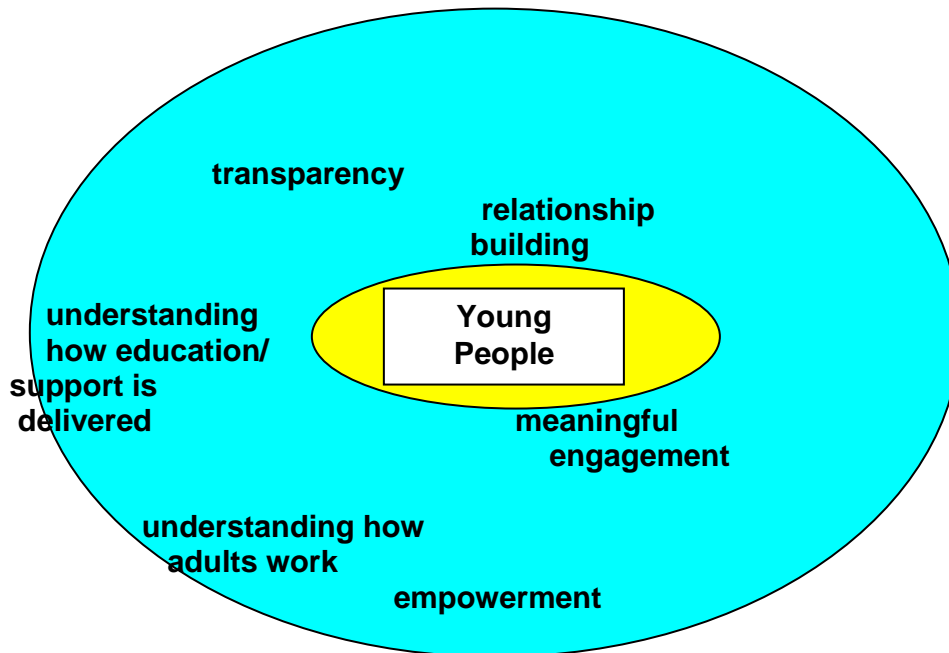
"Identification of common drivers/needs across partners (16+LC, GIRFEC, CfE, etc)"

"Creation of common understanding/vision through collaboration"

"Increased capacity via partnership activity"

"Effective use of resources"

World Café discussions



"Shared vision/shared language amongst staff"

"As participants (watching how others learn)"

"Awareness of pupils' skills development links to CfE, experiences and outcomes"

"Improved teacher practice leads to enhanced pupil gain"

"Development of a shared learning culture"

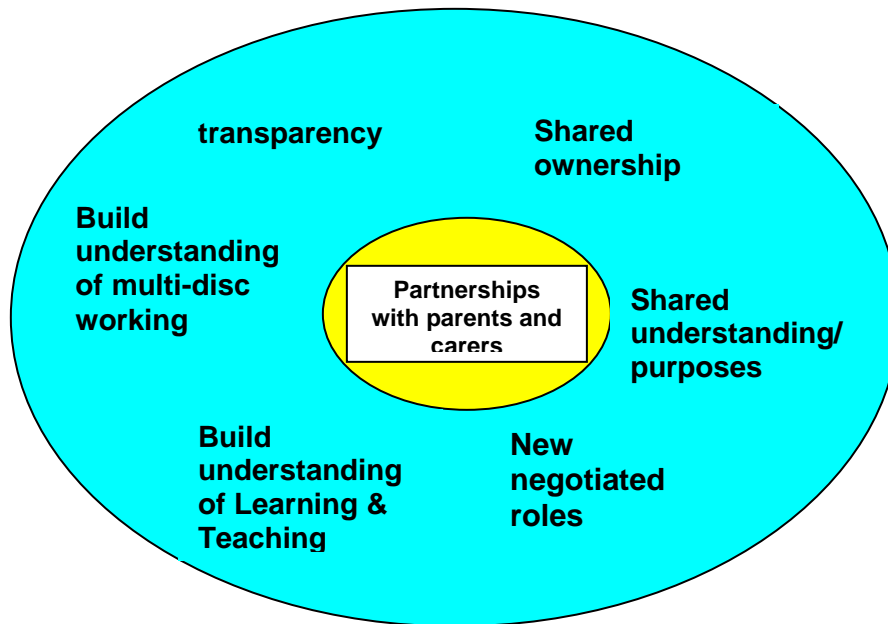
"Teachers as role models as learners and involved in collegiate activity"

"Empowerment re learning styles"

"Interagency collaboration shows children/young people that all agencies have a shared interest in them"

"Recognised as partners in the process and outcomes"

World Café discussion



"Provides real opportunities for parental/carer involvement in school improvement"

"Allows a shared view"

"Has the potential to raise parental expectations of their own contribution"

"Can underline shared responsibilities"

"Opens up the possibility of negotiating complementary roles"

"Could give a focus for parent boards"