Learning Together: Improvement through self-evaluation

Achieving success for all learners

Journey to Excellence

Professional development pack topics have been chosen to help you plan a journey through popular staff development themes. They provide “guided tours” through some of the resources on The Journey to Excellence website as a window onto excellent practice. Engaging with the associated activities will help you to reflect on and develop your practice purposefully.
This resource will be updated to reflect new and innovative approaches as Curriculum for Excellence is developed. Please email or comment in the box below any feedback on the resource or suggestions for improvement to help keep the resource up to date.
Purpose of this activity

This pack provides opportunities for reflecting on your own practice and explores how effective self-evaluation leads to improvement in learners’ experiences and achievements. It will allow you to draw on the characteristics of excellence in self-evaluation, on illustrative practice from all sectors and on the perspectives of a range of leading educationalists. This professional development pack looks at how you might use self-evaluation to improve the quality of education across the school as a whole. It complements the professional development pack ‘Self-evaluation to improve learning’, which focuses on improvements within individual classrooms.

The activities will enable you to:

- consider high quality practice in the area of self-evaluation;
- extend your knowledge and expertise through studying innovative and creative practice;
- reflect on your own practice;
- plan how to develop your practice to incorporate some new concepts and ideas; and
- share views with colleagues on improving performance through self-evaluation.

Learning outcomes

After completing this programme you will have:

- identified your current level of knowledge and expertise in improving your school or pre-school centre through self-evaluation;
- developed a deeper understanding of how you can identify areas of strength and areas for improvement by
  - considering the views of stakeholders;
  - observing current practice;
- analysing different sources of data and information;
- discussed, and reflected on research evidence and the contributions of fellow professionals; and
- planned, implemented and reviewed ways of bringing about improvement to your pre-school centre or school through self-evaluation.

Who is this for?

This programme is designed to help leaders and staff at all levels to make improvements to their school or pre-school centre through self-evaluation. It focuses on using approaches across the establishment, including analysis of data, observation of practice and acting on the views of all stakeholders to improve the successes and achievements of all learners.

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1 Data may be of different kinds, for example, data relating to attendance, behaviour, exclusions, leavers’ destinations, attainment and awards. It can also include information about the rate of learners’ progress and development in relation to Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes, as evident in individual folios and classwork, personal learning plans, individualised education programmes, coordinated support plans, individual profiles, transition records and reports to parents. The range of data available for analysis will vary depending on the sector or setting in which you work. Some will be collected at national level and some by the local authority or by the school or pre-school centre itself.
What will I/we need to work through this professional development pack?

You will need access to the online resource which supports The Journey to Excellence.

It would also be useful to have access to Improving Outcomes for Learners through Self-evaluation and Learning together: Opening up learning. The compilation film clips Learning Together support the Learning together: Opening up learning publication.

Is this an individual activity or do I need to work with others?

The core activities enable you to work individually at a time and place of your choice. However, you will also have opportunities to work with colleagues and to discuss and reflect on how self-evaluation can be used more effectively to bring about improvement. You will also be asked to consider how working on this programme has changed the way you go about improving outcomes for learners in your establishment.

The pack may easily be adapted at stage, department or whole-school levels to allow larger groups of staff to work through it collaboratively.

How long will it take?

This pack may take some time to work through in its entirety, but individual sections can be used on their own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Linking our vision to improvement</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Improving performance by taking account of stakeholders' views</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How good are we at improving our performance by observing learning?</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How good is our use of data?</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Impact for learners</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are only approximate timings as you may wish to adapt activities to suit your particular working environment.
1. Introduction

The Journey to Excellence

The Journey to Excellence provides illustrations of how pre-school centres and schools have achieved excellence in self-evaluation. All five broad areas of excellence show how schools and centres have achieved excellence through evaluating the quality of the education they provide.

“In seeking continuous improvement it is important that schools focus on what we know are the levers for improvement.”  

Planning for Excellence

These levers or broad areas of excellence are; learning and teaching, vision and leadership, promoting active partnerships, involving and developing people and fostering the right culture and ethos. HMIE inspections show that self-evaluation is not always focused on key features of these broad areas such as classroom practice, meeting needs, and every practitioner’s professional learning.

Schools and centres need to take concerted action in these five areas to enable their learners to develop the capacities, attitudes, capabilities and skills, which are the outcomes of Curriculum for Excellence.

In this way, schools can prepare their young people for life and work in a constantly changing and challenging world - a world for which they need highly developed and flexible skills and secure personal and community values.

Planning for Excellence aims to help schools and centres streamline their improvement planning, where that is necessary, and focus on achieving outcomes for children. It stresses the importance of involving parents, partner organisations and learners themselves in improving their establishment.

Introductory Activity / Reflection Activity

Watch the introductory movie on self-evaluation

Reflection introductory movie

Consider self-evaluation in your own establishment. After reading the Improvement guides for people, identify the areas of strength and areas for improvement in your own establishment’s current approaches to self-evaluation.

Activity
“Everyone must create time to reflect - dedicated time. We all have a responsibility as professionals for our own improvement.”

Class teacher

Collate your findings in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current approaches to self-evaluation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Look at the areas for improvement you have identified. In discussion with colleagues, select a maximum of three which are of key importance to your school or centre and will result in discernible improvement to the learning and achievements of your children and young people. Discuss some initial ideas for making self-evaluation more effective in these areas. What additional or alternative activities would make a difference?

Finish this session by looking at the ‘Aiming High’ movie clip:

Movie

The purpose of any school's approach to self-evaluation will always be to aim as high as possible for all learners.
2. **Linking our vision to improvement**

If your establishment has not recently revisited its vision, values and aims, it may be useful to do so. You may find it helpful to use the professional development pack on vision.

[www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/VisionrevisedJan09final_tcm4-529059.pdf](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/VisionrevisedJan09final_tcm4-529059.pdf)

In this movie we see how one school has developed its vision for improvement.

**Making the vision live: St Thomas of Aquin's High School**


**Individually or as a team consider the following:**

- How ambitious and challenging is the vision which your establishment has set itself? Does it provide a clear sense of direction?
- To what extent does your establishment’s vision **focus on achieving outcomes for learners** and reflect the vision within your local council and across Scotland as a whole?
- How do you use your establishment’s vision, values and aims to review the quality of education, guide improvements and shape its future direction?
- In pairs give examples of how you can see the establishment’s ‘vision’ in action within day-to-day activities. Share your examples with a larger group and collate them. Are there any gaps? What could you do to reflect the vision more directly in action?

**Living the vision, values and aims:**

In one school the headteacher asked everyone to agree which school aim they were helping to achieve when they met together as outcome groups or teams of pupils, parents and staff. What was he/she hoping to accomplish by doing this?

You could try using this approach at meetings over the next month.
3. Improving performance by taking account of stakeholders’ views

“No school operates in isolation. Children learn within, through and about the community in which they live. Wider links broaden their horizons even further. Many people touch the lives of young people.”

*The Journey to Excellence, Part 2, p 66*

In order to get it right for every child, schools need to consult, communicate and work with others in supportive and effective ways. Multi-disciplinary partnerships enable schools to work with others to plan, deliver and evaluate improved outcomes and experiences for children and young people.

Stakeholder groups may include children, young people, parents and other adults, and external agencies and partners.
How good are we now?

Who are our school's key stakeholders?

Complete table 4, below, to help you reflect on how you currently work with your stakeholders to improve your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>How do we develop and share our vision with our stakeholders?</th>
<th>How do we currently gather the views of our stakeholders?</th>
<th>What else can we do to gather their views?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2

Gathering the views of all stakeholders is only the starting point. Their views need to be carefully analysed, areas for improvement identified and action taken so that learners' experiences and outcomes actually improve. It is important stakeholders are involved at all stages of implementation and review. There is a need for clear communication of findings and action to be taken from surveys or consultations undertaken. Over time it is essential stakeholders receive regular updates of progress and impact from changes made.

Using the views of children and young people to improve the school.

This activity will help you to develop approaches for discussing learning with children and young people.

Watch this movie to see how one school developed ways of involving young people in their learning.

Observe, reflect and develop learning: Dunbar Grammar
http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/video_tcm4552668.asp
Here are some examples of strategies used across schools in Scotland to gather the views of young people on learning.

- **Innovative use of media and technologies**
  - Children used a range of technology including text messaging, an online suggestions box, and web-logs to enable ongoing discussion about learning with their teachers. Young people with a wide range of additional support needs expressed choices through the use of digital photography, switches, objects of reference and boardmaker symbols.

- **Pupil Learning Council**
  - The main role of the Pupil Council was to improve learning. They created a pupil-friendly version of the improvement plan, discussed agreed success criteria for classroom monitoring, and gave feedback on the option choice sheet.

- **Learning Walks**
  - Children were involved in quality improvement activities including walking around the school with senior managers to discuss learning in action and look for the impact of initiatives such as collaborative learning. Children painted ideas onto stones they found on the walk.

- **Tools for Learners**
  - Every aspect of the school’s quality improvement calendar contained tools which enabled pupils to become fully involved. For example, when monitoring attendance a focus group produced figures to present at an assembly and led a discussion of the reasons for particular patterns they had spotted.

- **Leading CPD**
  - Young people were involved in a pilot of assessment for learning in one subject department. They then led a session to give all staff feedback on strategies they had found successful. They discussed how other departments might use similar approaches.

- **Learning Assemblies**
  - Senior managers used assemblies to consult all children about the impact of improvements. The outcomes of monitoring were shared, new policies were launched and the headteacher set a weekly learning challenge for all staff and children.

- **Tip for the teacher**
  - Children were asked to reflect on the lesson and suggest what could be improved for next time.

- **How some schools have sought the views of children and young people on learning**

- **“What was your magic moment of the lesson?”**
  - Children were asked to feedback back the parts of the lesson they thought were most successful.
Reflective questions for group discussion:

- Can you think of ways of involving learners in every activity on your quality assurance calendar?
- As curriculum leaders or managers how can you set enjoyable challenges to help teachers move forward on action points from classroom monitoring?
- Consider the priorities within your school’s or centre’s improvement plan. Is there an aspect which children or young people could lead on?
- If you went on a learning walk around your school, what do you think learners would tell you about the impact of your recent improvement initiatives? What would they see, feel and hear in classrooms?
- What might the minutes of your pupil council tell you about its role and impact in improving learning? What range of activities has the pupil council been involved in? How can you increase its role in improving learning?
- How are you maximising the potential of communications technologies to engage learners in discussions on how to improve their learning?
- What tools can class teachers use to gather feedback from learners during lessons?

As a group of staff you could decide on one initiative to take forward for each of the reflective questions. Encourage a member of staff to lead on and develop this initiative across the school during a set period of time.

Activity
4. How good are we at improving our performance by observing learning

‘Ancora imparo’ (I am still learning) Michelangelo

We can all learn new skills and techniques from each other. In a learning organisation staff are learning alongside children and young people. However long we have been in the profession there are always new things to learn from our colleagues.

“Reflective communities have staff who are motivated and enthusiastic and are happy to discuss what is going on in their classrooms.”

Class teacher

In any observation of learning and teaching, it helps to have a focus. Here are some typical examples:

You could add other examples to this table, either individually or with a colleague. The Child at the Centre and How good is our school? may give you some more ideas. You may also choose to focus on a particular aspect of Curriculum for Excellence or an improvement plan priority.

### Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of learning and teaching observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How well children and young people collaborate in groups/pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent to which tasks, activities and resources are matched to the needs of learners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
There are benefits to inviting peers and promoted staff to observe learning and teaching.

**With a colleague, or individually, discuss the benefits of different people being involved in observing learning and teaching and working alongside teachers in classes.**

**Activity**

Ensure that support staff also have opportunities to observe/be observed. It is important that observations do not just take place within the class. All areas of a school are potential learning environments. For example, if you were considering a theme related to celebrating success, it would be important to observe practice in corridors, in the playground and in the dining hall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleague of the same discipline/stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleague of a different discipline or stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Decide on a focus from your initial list on *Table 5*, page 20 and organise an observation/self-evaluation session.
- The person observing may also participate in the activity/lesson as appropriate and not just act as a passive observer.
- Following the period of observation the reviewer should record three areas of positive practice and one area for development to discuss with his/her colleague.
- The positive practice should be shared with as wide an audience as possible.
- Recording positive practice from classroom observations in a visible place in the staffroom can be a good way to increase confidence in innovative teaching.
Leaders need to consider how they track progress in areas identified for development and how they ensure that any steps they take to address these challenges have a positive impact.

**Activity**

Record a list of the ways in which we can ensure that improvement takes place as a result of learning observations.

5. **How good is our use of data?**

The following movie describes what it means to be ‘data rich’. You may also wish to look at some of the associated movies which are available through this link.

**Being data rich**


“Reflecting on practice is a shared process - a culture of self-evaluation is built in.”

*Principal teacher*

**How do you currently use the following sources of evidence to improve outcomes for learners?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>DATA AND INFORMATION</th>
<th>OBSERVATIONS OF LEARNING</th>
<th>VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4*
Improving performance through data analysis

The Journey to Excellence Part 3 offers the following diagram for evaluating quality. In this section you will be encouraged to reflect on your use of quantitative and qualitative data in planning improvements. This can help you to create a data-rich, evidence-based approach to making improvements through self-evaluation.

![Diagram of evaluating quality]

Every educational establishment generates data on its performance and the purpose of this activity is to analyse the impact of these sources of data.

**Key performance data is likely to include:**

Base-line assessments, standardised assessments, trends in literacy and numeracy skills, attainment levels, Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) results, award scheme accreditations, vocational qualifications, results in comparison to schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds, progress through individualised learning targets and targets in coordinated support plans, and rates of exclusion and attendance.

In the following movie we see how one school and one department in particular, used SQA data to improve performance and the learning experience for young people.

**Learning together through self-evaluation: Cumnock Academy**

http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/video_tcm4552669.asp

**Activity**

Identify all the sources of data which you currently use in your establishment. Take each source and rate it as *not very useful, useful or very useful* in helping you to identify areas where you could improve outcomes for children and young people. Reflect on any source of data which you have rated as *not very useful*. Consider how to improve the quality or the use made of the data to make it more meaningful and improve outcomes for learners.
How good are we now?

- How does our establishment’s performance compare to performance in other schools or centres which serve children and young people with similar needs and backgrounds?
- What evidence do we have about contextual factors, for example, socio-economic background, which may have an impact on how our school or centre performs? How do we use this knowledge to help us find ways of improving the learning and achievement of children and young people?
- What use do we make of data on attendance rates and patterns, exclusions, behaviour and the circumstances of individual children and young people when analysing the factors which influence their achievements and progress? What action do we then take to reduce the effect of these circumstances on both individual and overall performance?
- How do we use data to identify and monitor the achievements of particular individuals and groups? Can we do this better?
- How do we use data to check that learners are making progress in their learning at a suitable rate?
- How do we use data to predict the progress and achievements of individual learners? How do we then use this data to plan learning which meets the needs of different groups and learners?
- How regularly do senior managers and staff discuss performance data and how do they use their findings to ensure that learners are making progress?

You may find it helpful to work in pairs or small groups and answer two or three of these questions each. Consider how each of these aspects is being addressed in your school or centre. If it is not an aspect of your current practice, consider how you could develop a similar approach in your own school.

In the following movie you will see how a secondary school uses data to track performance and engage young people in their learning.

**Reflective and effective learning: St Luke’s High School**


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Data may be of different kinds, for example, data relating to attendance, behaviour, exclusions, leavers’ destinations, attainment and awards. It can also include information about the rate of learners’ progress and development in relation to Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes, as evident in individual folios and classwork, personal learning plans, individualised education programmes, coordinated support plans, individual profiles, transition records and reports to parents. The range of data available for analysis will vary depending on the sector or setting in which you work. Some will be collected at national level and some by the education authority or by the school or pre-school centre itself.
How good can we be?

Consider the following signposts to improvement.

Best practice in using data.

- Schools identify areas of performance which could be improved in relation to comparator schools. In special schools or nurseries this will involve considering ways to benchmark with other establishments which are meaningful to the needs of learners and the context of the school.
- Staff challenge assumptions about historical patterns and trends within the school context.
- They plan interventions to help individuals and groups overcome barriers to learning. They constantly ask, ‘Are we doing everything possible to improve the life chances of our most vulnerable learners?’
- They use performance data to develop challenging pathways of progress for individuals and groups which continue through transitions.
- They know what children and young people need to learn in order to progress to the next level of achievement.
- They use data as part of teachers’ ongoing planning and preparation, in order to match tasks and activities to individual learning needs.
- They involve learners in planning their learning and setting and reviewing individual learning targets.
- They bring about improvements in learning and achievement by setting agreed and challenging learning targets based on consistently high expectations for all learners.
- They continually discuss and update the data they have collected. They take early action to address any factors which could affect the progress of individuals or groups.

Select one ‘signpost’ per month/term/year to promote actively in your school/department/establishment. Record how you do this and the impact it has on performance.

Activity

Taking a closer look: Using data to improve the performance of individuals and groups.

The following movie is about being a motivating teacher.

The motivating teacher - Alan McLean
http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/expertspeakers/themotivatingteacheralanmclean.asp
Identify a learner who has been consistently disengaged from his or her play or learning. Gather as much information as you can about this learner’s progress and achievement over time. Use the table on page 13 to summarise what you know about this learner and what is currently in place to help him or her to progress. In the third column, think as imaginatively and creatively as you can about what further support could be provided to engage him or her in learning.

Aim to identify solutions both within and out with the class/playroom. These solutions might include working with partner organisations.

Use each of the themes from QI 5.3 Meeting learning needs to help you identify some of the possible reasons for this individual’s under-achievement. Alternatively, you may prefer to focus on a group of young people, a class or even under-achievement across the whole school, depending on your remit.

QI 5.3 Meeting learning needs

Key Features

- **Theme 1**: Tasks activities and resources
- **Theme 2**: Identification of learning needs
- **Theme 3**: The roles of teachers and specialist staff
- **Theme 4**: Meeting and implementing the requirements of legislation
You may also find it helpful to consider the Getting it Right for Every Child agenda which provides indicators of well-being for all young people.
Evaluating current provision for disengaged children and young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible reasons for a young person being disengaged from learning (refer to QI 5.3 themes and indicators of wellbeing).</th>
<th>What is the school or centre currently doing to address his or her disengagement?</th>
<th>How can we improve on what we are currently doing?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 5

As we implement Curriculum for Excellence, schools will need to ensure that all children and young people benefit from planned opportunities for personal achievement across and beyond the curriculum. Consider how you can track and improve the experiences and outcomes for all learners.

In the following movie, see how a special school uses target setting to monitor the performance of young people and help them achieve success.

Total communication: Prospect Bank School
http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/video_tcm4552672transcript.asp

“Gaining recognition for their achievements and the skills for life and work that are developed through them, can benefit all young people. It can increase their confidence, raise their aspirations, improve their motivation for learning and keep them engaged in education.”

Building the Curriculum 3 p.45
Evaluating learners' achievements

Evaluating the achievements of others is not necessarily a straightforward matter. For example, how much do you know about the personal achievements of every learner in your class?

- Work with a colleague who also knows this learner.
- Independently, take five minutes to list the learner’s achievements outside the classroom based on what you know about them already.
- Share your lists and find out if the learner has achieved things you didn’t know about.
- What does this activity tell you about the challenges of identifying and evaluating individual achievements? Think about how you can gather and track data on achievements so that you can identify any learners who are missing out and to help you plan how you might improve their experiences.

You may wish to consider tracking a learner’s achievements using the attributes and abilities within the four capacities of a Curriculum for Excellence. For example, consider the attributes and abilities of a Successful Learner in your learning community.

Attributes
How does A:
- show enthusiasm and motivation for learning?
- show determination to reach high standards of achievement?
- show openness to new thinking and ideas?

Abilities
How does A:
- Use literacy and communication?
- Use numeracy?
- Use technology?
- Think creatively?
- Learn independently and as part of a group?
- Make reasoned evaluations?
- Link and apply her learning?
- Overall how successful a learner has A become this term/year?
Answer the above questions for one learner in your class over a set period of time. Record as many achievements as possible which link to that particular young person. Have you been able to assess/evaluate these achievements?

**Activity**

Now turn the questions around to ask:

How do we, as a school, ensure that our children and young people:

- show enthusiasm and motivation for learning?
- show determination to reach high standards of achievement?
- show openness to new thinking and ideas?

What can we do as a school to help them become more successful learners? How will we know?

By turning the attributes and abilities of any of the four capacities into questions, you have a straightforward tool for gathering evidence to evaluate young people’s achievements.

6. **Impact for Learners**

A final movie and questions to reflect on:

Being encouraged through a vibrant and progressive school culture and climate

http://www.journeytoexcellence.org.uk/videos/dim84intro.asp

These questions have been taken from section six of *Improving Outcomes for Learners through Self-evaluation*.

1. Do teachers and learners have appropriate expectations? Is there a strong ethos of achievement? [QI 5.5]
2. Do learners have an appropriate curriculum? [QI 5.1]
3. Does the establishment take effective steps to meet learners’ emotional, physical and social needs? [QI 5.8]
4. Is leadership of the establishment aspirational? Do the vision, values and aims guide, and have an impact on improvement? [QI 9.1]
5. How effective are leaders at bringing about change and improvement? [QI 9.4]
6. Does the school/centre have appropriate systems and culture to evaluate its own progress and take steps to bring about improvements? [QI 5.9]
Carousel Activity

- Note each question at the top of a large piece of paper or screen.
- In rotation, each group or pair records its responses under each question heading.
- On returning to the original piece of paper/screen and question, the group should consider all the answers gathered and choose three to feed back to everyone, with a single suggestion for improvement.
- Compare this with your answers to the task on Table 1, page 7.

And to conclude...

Watch this movie clip to see how one school works as a team on self-evaluation. This has a positive impact on learning and teaching and on learners’ achievements and self-esteem.

**Encouraging feedback encourages growth: Portree Primary**


How will your practice change following the implementation of some of the ideas in this pack?

What impact will this have on your learners?

“I am prepared to go anywhere, provided it be forward.”

*David Livingstone*