



PPTA TE WEHENGARUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018

COMMUNITIES OF LEARNING– Improving the community of schools model

2018 PPTA CONFERENCE PAPER



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This report considers problems identified with employment-related aspects of communities of learning which are inherent in its design and proposes solutions to those problems.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the report be received.
2. That the PPTA endorse the underlying principles of the Communities of Learning, namely:
 - Collaborative practices within and between schools
 - Classroom-based career options
3. That the PPTA notes there are significant weaknesses in the current Communities of Learning model, and advises the Minister of Education to investigate and address these.
4. That the PPTA advises the Minister of Education that we should
 - Halve the number of within school teacher roles and make all the remaining roles permanent
 - Build wider commitment and participation in the Communities of Learning by creating Community of Learning task payments and time allowances for those not in within school or across community roles
 - Rebalance the internal relativities between middle leaders and Community of Learning roles
 - Strengthen the alternative career pathway and enhance sharing of good practice by agreeing that at least one across community teacher per Community of Learning is a permanent position with responsibility for inter-community liaison
 - Address additional teacher workload created by the Community of Learning, and improve professional growth by expansion of IT time to an entitlement of 40 hours per year per FTTE
 - Address employment, administration and governance issues by creating and resourcing Community of Learning boards within the Education Act
 - Require external input for within school teacher selection

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This paper considers the history of the Communities of Learning roles and the problems identified with their operation and governance, then proposes changes to address those problems.

2. HISTORY

- 2.1. Communities of Learning¹ (CoL) were introduced as the key component of the Investing in Educational Success (IES) initiative in 2014.
- 2.2. While the initial cabinet proposal was not supported by the sector in its original form, central to the CoL model were two essential elements which reflected established NZPPTA policy:
 1. A new **collaborative** model of schools with a common community of interest working together to support learning.
 2. New career pathways for teachers in the form of three new CoL-related roles: the CoL Leadership role, the Across Community Teacher (ACT) role, and the Within School Teacher (WST) role.
- 2.3. A sector-wide group, the IES Working Party, provided a report² to the cabinet on how the policy could be effectively implemented. With many of its recommendations accepted by the government of the day and a number of additional changes negotiated by PPTA as part of its 2014 variation to the Secondary Teachers Collective Agreement (STCA) and Secondary Principals' Collective Agreement (SPCA), the Association gave support to the implementation of the initiative.
- 2.4. There were, however, some areas that the government had been inflexible on that the Association signalled would cause problems. Central to the concerns of this paper were the rigidity around the number of roles, the pay rates for those roles, and the impact the roles and rates would have on internal relativities with middle leadership.
- 2.5. The relevant details of the new roles for this paper can be summarised as:

Role	Number nationally	Number locally	Time allowance (hours per week)	Pay
Within school	5,000	c.1 per 10 FTTE ³	2	\$8,000
Across community	1,000	3-4 per CoL	10	\$16,000
Leadership role	250	1 per CoL	10	\$30,000

¹ Originally, and synonymously, called 'Communities of Schools'. This is the term PPTA to use formally for the organisation of schools under this initiative and is used in the STCA. The other common term for them is 'KĀHUI AKO'.

² *Investing in Educational Success Working Group Report 3 June 2014- Ministry of Education.*

³ Full time teacher equivalent

- 2.6. Further problems were identified in the implementation of the IES over the next three years. These led to the PPTA Executive deciding in April 2017 to review the implementation of CoL. To this end, in 2017 the Association conducted a survey of principals and PPTA members in secondary and composite schools identified by the Ministry as belonging to a Community of Learning. The report from that review highlighted a number of issues in implementation and operation of the CoLs and the CoL roles⁴.
- 2.7. In 2017-2018, the PPTA conducted a number of meetings across the country to discuss with members in CoLs – particularly those in WST, SCT and ACT roles and school leaders – the operations of the CoL with respect to the development and implementation of the CoL positions, and what expectations were. A number of concerns were raised at those meetings.
- 2.8. Before considering the problems identified by the PPTA, it is important to establish the framework in which we are considering them, which is
- The largest group of members still feel CoL are a good idea, and believe in the underlying principles⁵
 - Those who have CoL roles generally view the roles and the initiative favourably
 - The increased focus on student development through school years and the availability of some PLD are both welcome.
- 2.9. This paper, therefore, is about seeking to correct problems with the CoL initiative rather than replace it.

3. ISSUES IN THE ESTABLISHMENT PHASE

- 3.1. As mentioned earlier, the key issues in the establishment phase regarded levels of pay for, and the numbers of, new roles. There was also little funding made available for the administration costs of establishing and operating the Communities.

4. ISSUES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

- 4.1. Concerns identified by the PPTA
1. Inadequate consultation with parents and teaching staff
 2. Inflexibility within leadership roles
 3. Issues with the achievement challenges CoL were allowed to progress
 4. A lack of PLD for the roles
 5. The failure of many schools to introduce the new roles appropriately
 6. Difficulties in filling the new roles, particularly the WST roles and SCT positions

⁴ <https://www.ppta.org.nz/dmsdocument/568>

⁵ 48% supported the principles, 21% were ambivalent, 9% were opposed to them and 20% were unsure of what the underlying principles were.

7. The extra workload created for teachers and CoL role holders
 8. The limited development of collaborative leadership
 9. Concerns about the governance and management of the CoLs
 10. Misuse of CoL resources within some schools
 11. The inadequacy of resourcing for the operation of the CoLs
 12. Friction between teachers
 13. The fixed term nature of the ACT role working against the goal of an alternative career pathway
- 4.2. The first three of these areas are being addressed to some degree by the Ministry and the new government. The other issues have flowed into the establishment phase of the CoLs. The rest of this paper focusses on the teacher roles and (because it cannot be separated) the question of the governance/management of CoLs.

5. ONGOING ISSUES

IN-SCHOOL TENSIONS OVER THE ROLES

- 5.1. In talking to CoL teachers and leaders around the country, it is apparent that there are things which are fundamentally wrong with the current model. These things are creating resentment amongst the non-CoL role teachers, and threaten to undermine the initiative.
- 5.2. Some CoL teachers are not aware that a core part of their role is to work with other teachers to provide modelling and feedback on good practice. It is not at all clear that most do this core function, and some have even indicated that they do not want to. This failure to pursue the 'working with staff' aspect of the role may be in part because some do not want to do the face-to-face aspects of the role, in part because they were unaware that they were expected to, and in part because they are being redirected to non-CoL work by some school leaders. In some cases it is the school that wants the WSTs working on things rather than with people.
- 5.3. Some ACTs, principals, and CoL leaders see the WSTs as simply an implementation layer or an opportunity to assign staff to school-based projects which have no obvious connection to the CoL. Where this happens in a school within a CoL, the CoL leaders seem to have little ability to do anything about it, despite the fact that it is effectively a misuse of the CoL resources.
- 5.4. The risk is that WSTs are seen as simply another body imposing additional workload if there is not a counterbalance of working alongside teachers for their benefit. In an environment where workload pressures are already a major issues for classroom teachers and middle leaders, this attitude – alongside the fact that CoL teachers are often using their time allowances for their own PLD and thinking time (and being paid for it) – makes for a volatile mix. This is frequently reported to be compounded by poor selection and appointment processes for WSTs, and the lack of rigour and transparency that is more normal for the ACT appointments.

- 5.5. A further problem exacerbating frustration is that the CoL roles are about giving teachers time to consider the big picture and make changes. However, the need to do that cannot be arbitrarily confined to one in 10 teachers; the need to have space to think about practice and the larger picture and to find ways to work towards improving outcomes is part of the professional needs and expectations for all teachers. This is different to the HoD role where there are also additional time allowances and pay for our curriculum leaders, but where the additional management functions that go with them largely fill the space that would be desirable for reflection and practice leadership.
- 5.6. Adding to that, many teachers are reporting that the CoL has increased their work burden by requiring increasing amounts of time spent on PLD – which in itself is not a bad thing, but as an imposition on top of unmanageable workloads is not well received.

NUMBER OF WST ROLES PUTTING A STRAIN ON SCHOOLS

- 5.7. We are also finding complaints about not being able to fill all of the positions, or only being able to do so by using middle leaders, which is creating problems around capacity, causing clashes in requirements for appraising/assessing staff in the conflicting roles, and muddying the waters around the alternative career pathway.
- 5.8. Currently there is approximately one WST role per 10 FTTE. An average size school of 60 FTTE may have seven classroom-based career roles (six WST positions plus the Specialist Classroom Teacher (SCT)). Roughly half of teachers are in roles to which units are attached. Given the experience required in the CoL roles, it is relatively difficult to fill those roles from the classroom teachers. This means many of the roles have to be filled by middle leaders, which creates pressure on schools to fill either type of role.
- 5.9. Some schools are also now indicating that they cannot fill their SCT position because they are prioritising filling their WST roles (despite the lower level of resourcing available for the WST relative to the SCT).
- 5.10. There are also examples of senior leaders or middle leaders appointed to the CoL roles retaining significant administrative responsibilities, and of schools trying to get around this by using fixed term units to 'hide' the management role payments. This undermines the purpose of an alternative career pathway, and also signals that there are too many CoL roles for schools to appoint without resorting to doubling up the roles of existing managers.
- 5.11. Schools also complain about difficulty with backfilling their CoL roles, especially those already struggling with reliever and more general teacher shortages.
- 5.12. These issues point to there being too many WST positions for system to absorb. The appointment of teachers to task-oriented roles rather than to people-oriented roles suggests too that the current model is not working. There needs to be a tighter focus on what the WST role is about, the number of people that we can reasonably absorb into the system, who is appointed to roles, and who might better be recognised by alternative payments and allowances for task-focused work.
- 5.13. The same does not appear to be the case with the ACT position. The issues more likely to be raised there are about a lack of permanence of the position undermining the notion of a career path, a lack of clarity around authorities and who is responsible for the support of

those teachers when they are operating in schools other than their employing school, and, again, what their functions are meant to be.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE? WHAT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE?

5.14. There are also problems with the governance/management/employment arrangements in the CoLs that need to be resolved. Principals are reporting confusion about the line between oversight, governance, and management by the CoL steering committee/governance group, and the employment and financial responsibilities of the boards. In part, this confusion is inherent in a structure that essentially does not exist. A Community of Learning or a CoL governance group is not in itself a legal entity for the purposes of owning property, employing teachers or support staff, making employment decisions, and so forth. The schools remain the employers, and the boards retain the responsibility for the management of the funding they receive from the state. In a few cases, schools have effectively ceded from all practical involvement in the CoL once they have obtained the resourcing that comes with it. In others, funding decisions are being made about board money with little evidence that appropriate authorities have agreed or processes been followed. CoLs are (with the assistance of the Ministry) creating mechanisms by which they can acquire shared resources and shared funding.

6. TIDYING THINGS UP

- 6.1. The relationship problems that we are seeing between col and non-col teachers, the tensions with middle leadership roles, and the uncertainties created by the lack of a real Community of Learning entity require some significant changes. In broad terms, these are:
1. Reducing the number of WSTs and creating greater integration of all teaching staff into the CoL
 2. Strengthening the alternative career focus of the CoL roles
 3. Introducing greater rigour in the appointments process for WSTs
 4. Addressing relativities with the leadership career pathway
 5. Addressing the lack of a legal entity which is the CoL
 6. Addressing the workload issue created by the CoL

TOO MANY ROLES BUT TOO LITTLE BUY-IN

- 6.2. To broaden the number of people engaged with CoLs, to share the associated workload, and to address many of the concerns raised in this paper, we could reduce the number of WST positions and use the savings in part to create the equivalent of one fixed term 'CoL tasks' payment per teacher. Schools could then allocate these payments to non-CoL role holders for accepting specific tasks related to the CoL.
- 6.3. This also means that many people who are currently effectively blocked from CoL roles because the school cannot back-fill their positions (physics teachers, maths teachers, technology teachers, te reo teachers, etc) could become engaged in some paid way in the operation of the CoL.

- 6.4. Fewer WST roles will also mean less pressure on middle leadership positions and make it easier for schools to appoint suitably qualified people to all of the WST roles and middle leadership roles. Providing task-focussed payments would allow teachers in middle leadership and senior leadership roles to participate in some CoL activities without giving up their core roles or adding significant additional responsibilities to those roles.
- 6.5. In the longer term, as pressures on supply are eased, as internal relativities are re-established, and as a broader pool of qualified applicants becomes available, the number of WSTs could be systematically increased as part of a planned workforce strategy to a level which is manageable for schools, and which gives the maximum opportunity for classroom-based career options.
- 6.6. The savings from halving the number of WSTs could be used to increase the Inquiry time allocation to the equivalent of one hour per week for all teachers (rather than the current five hours per year). The savings could also be used to create the equivalent of one CoL-related task payment per teacher at the value of \$500.
- 6.7. The additional time could be used to provide space for all teachers to engage in CoL related activities (whether professional learning groups or specific tasks) and for more teachers to be recognised for activities which support the CoL and its achievement challenges. This would simultaneously achieve greater participation and buy-in to the CoL by larger numbers of teachers, and help to reduce the workload burden that CoLs have generated.
- 6.8. The agreed requirement around appointments of WST roles is that at least 60% in each school that has more than two roles must be permanent. The requirement for permanence establishes the CoL roles as a genuine alternative career pathway to the (mostly) permanent roles in the management pathway. Schools are expected to appoint to permanent WST roles teachers with the skills that are required over the long term (relationship building skills, organising and supporting broad professional development, mentoring adult learners etc.). It is these on-going roles that would continue to be filled by permanent appointments under the proposed changes.
- 6.9. Currently, up to 40% of WST roles in a school may be fixed term, and those second tier appointments are to allow schools to appoint teachers with skills and experience that will be required only for the lifetime of particular CoL achievement challenges. Those short term tasks would better be met using the proposed CoL payments and time allowances.
- 6.10. Reducing the number of WST positions might require in some schools the reduction of permanent WST roles. The STCA anticipates this, and there are provisions in part 4 of the Collective (and in the joint MoE/PPTA Guidelines to the appointment of Within School Teachers) to allow this to happen. (See Appendix 1 of this paper.) Teachers in permanent WST roles who lost that role would be paid the WST allowance for a year and would still be eligible to receive the new time and salary allowances if they retained responsibility for a CoL-related task. Changes are unlikely to affect those in fixed term roles, but if they did, those affected would receive payment for the remaining term of their role or one year – whichever is shorter.
- 6.11. Some area schools may have combined two WST roles to create an ACT role (this is not possible in secondary schools). These positions would resolve themselves if the number of WST roles were reduced as

1. ACT roles are currently fixed term, and no reduction of a permanent role would be required
2. The changes would require amendments to the staffing order in council as well as to the STCA, both of which would give schools adequate lead-in time to make the necessary adjustment

RESOLVING RELATIVITIES

- 6.12. The time and allowance payments for CoL roles reflect the value of the work expected of them by the IES Working Group. However, they bring into stark contrast the poor remuneration and time allowances provided to middle leaders. This exacerbates the difficulties schools have in filling middle leadership positions.
- 6.13. The solution can only be to raise middle leadership remuneration and time allowances to equally reflect the value and magnitude of the work expected of them. The PPTA's current STCA claim starts that rebalancing of relativities between the CoL roles and middle leadership positions.
- 6.14. This suggests that the payment for the CoL roles will not begin to increase until there is an indication that the supply pressures on middle leadership positions have eased.

STRENGTHENING THE ALTERNATIVE CAREER FOCUS OF THE COL ROLES

- 6.15. A number of steps will strengthen the alternative career pathway:
 1. Reducing the number of WST roles
 2. Making all WST permanent roles (like the SCT role) supported by fixed term time allowances and CoL task payments for other staff
 3. Creating at least one permanent ACT role per CoL
 4. Supporting the core function of working with other staff
 - i. Improve selection and appointments processes for WSTs
 - ii. Strengthen the CoL's capacity to address use of the CoL resources in member schools
 - iii. Limit the total number of units/allowances that can be held in the role

GREATER RIGOUR IN APPOINTMENTS OF WITHIN SCHOOL TEACHERS

- 6.16. This can be achieved within existing structures by
 - Using the independent national panel members when appointments are being made
 - Requiring that the appointment panel include the CoL leader and at least one other senior CoL member from outside the school
 - Requiring an appointment panel composed of equal numbers of employer and employee representatives
- 6.17. Alternatively, an over-CoL body with statutory authority could support the process.

CREATING A COL BOARD

- 6.18. A radical change is needed to enable the collaborative model to exist in the system. A legal entity, recognised in statute, which can be responsible for the employment matters and funding of the CoL, is required to support the educational integration of the community of schools. This could be something like the creation of a regional/area CoL board structure in which each school board could elect a representative when joining the local CoL.
- 6.19. Such an entity could
- Legally make decisions about management of CoL resources
 - Be responsible for employment matters pertaining to the CoL roles
 - Own and administer shared property and resources
 - Enter into service contracts on behalf of the schools
 - Be responsible for oversight of the use of the CoL resources (use of WST and ACT, travel funding, IT time allowances, administration funding, induction and mentoring allowance to the roles etc.) to ensure that the resources are being used appropriately
 - Administer a joint schools CoL funding account
 - Be responsible for CoL wide PLD etc
 - Support the administrative functions currently falling onto individual schools, particularly the school(s) employing those in the CoL Leadership role
- 6.20. The CoL board could also support and extend the role of the independent advisors.
- 6.21. In terms of employment responsibilities, the CoL Board could
- Employ the CoL leadership role and the ACTs (part time, with their non-CoL employment remaining with the employing school board)
 - Manage the resourcing, support and appraisal related to those roles
 - Ensure appointments of WSTs in each CoL school is appropriately undertaken
- 6.22. The Board could be composed (for example) of a designated representative from each member school board; a paid administrator; and a representative of the local Ministry of Education office; with a student, staff and principal representative elected from across the CoL member schools. The CoL board could have the option of full secondment of the CoL leader to act as CoL leader and CoL board administrator for their term.

Appendix: STCA provisions for disestablishment of WST roles

4.24.12 The allowance will cease to become payable when a teacher loses the role as a consequence of a reduction in the number of roles available to the school, subject to 4.24.13 and 4.24.14 below.

4.24.13 Where Community of Schools Teacher (within school) roles are to be reduced in number as a consequence of a reduction in the allocation to the Community of Schools, then the employer will first seek to manage any required reduction by attrition.

Where the reduction cannot be managed by attrition, then the process will be to reduce the fixed-term closest to the end of its term.

Where two or more fixed-term roles are of equal length from their end of term, the employers will review the functions of each position against the current needs of the school in relation to the Community of Schools' agreed objectives and determine which position is most needed.

Where there are no fixed-term roles, the employer shall review the functions of each permanent Community of Schools Teacher (within school) role against the current needs of the school and determine which roles are most needed.

Note: *The reduction may be in conjunction with the surplus staffing process, but is not of itself sufficient to require the processes outlined in clause 3.9.1(a) of this agreement.*

4.24.14 The salary protection provisions of 3.9.5(b) or 4.3.9(a) will apply as appropriate to teachers whose Community of Schools Teacher (within school) role is disestablished. If a teacher returns to – or is subsequently appointed to – a position of equal or higher remuneration than they received in the Community of Schools Teacher (within school) role, the salary protection no longer applies.

4.3.9 Where a teacher appointed to a position to which unit(s) are allocated loses that position or has the position altered in status because of the application of the surplus staffing provisions of this agreement, the salary protection arrangements of those provisions shall apply provided

(a) that where the allocation has been made on a fixed-term basis the period of protection shall be for the lesser of the term of the appointment agreed or for one year while the teacher continues to hold a position at the school; and provided also:

3.9.5 Preference in Appointment

(b) Any teacher who holds a position which has permanent units attached, and that position is or is about to be altered in status as a consequence of the operation of clause 3.9.1, who applies for the position as advertised at its new status, shall be appointed to that position unless in the meantime the teacher has been appointed to another permanent position provided that where the position has been reduced in status the teacher concerned shall continue to be paid at the salary s/he was receiving immediately prior to the reduction for a period of one year from the effective date of the reduction provided that s/he continues to hold that position. This sub-clause is not applicable to holders of fixed-term unit(s).