

# Sharing the Lead – Sharing the Load

Developing Middle Leadership Capacity in Irish schools

Action Research Project Ireland



*Mary Nihill, National Director Centre for School Leadership (CSL) Ireland*

# A Collaborative Project

Department of Education

DE Inspectorate

IPPN and NAPD

Clare and Kildare Education Centres

Centre for School Leadership (CSL)



# Rationale for Project

Lack of mediation of policy at school level

Underdeveloped middle leadership structures

Sustainability of Principalship

Unstructured career continuum

Segregated professional learning for senior and middle leaders

# Three Broad Aims



Develop collaborative leadership capacity in schools



Inform the system about what works /does not work



Inform the system about the challenges



# Defining Middle Leaders in this Project

- CSL Continuum – all teachers are leaders
- “Middle leadership in this context is being interpreted as those roles which have an ‘out-of-classroom’ remit and a strategic leadership focus.”

*(Learning to be a School Leader in Ireland:24)*



# Elements of the project

Schools invited to participate

Experienced facilitators assigned

Schools clustered in threes

In house facilitated leadership meets

Online asynchronous modules

School leadership projects – a vehicle to develop capacity

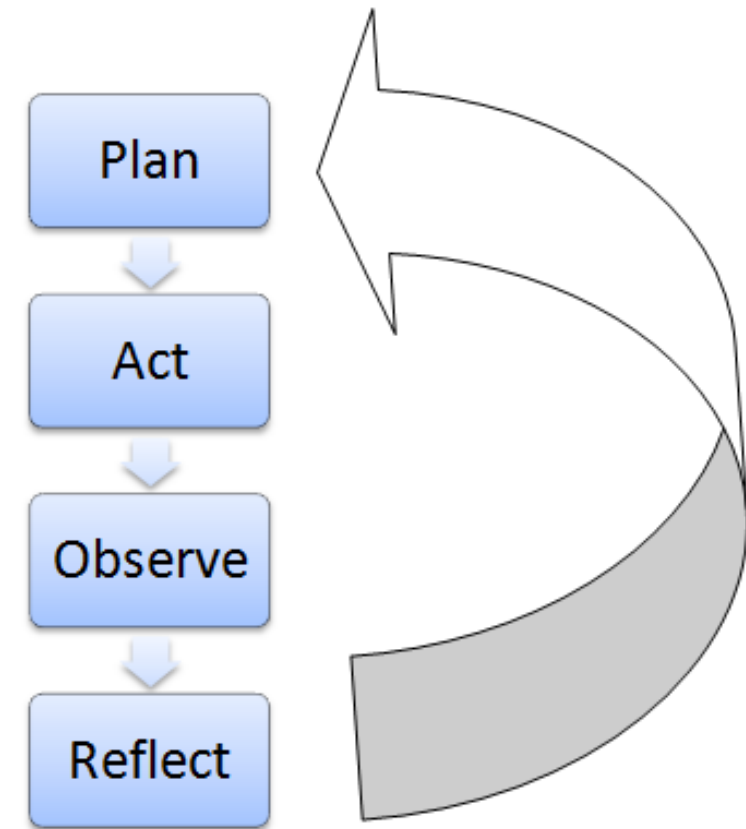
Ongoing summative and formative evaluation

Facilitated twilight clusters

# Action Research Methodology

Schools are facilitated to:

- Evaluate their leadership learning needs in terms of skills, knowledge and competencies
- Develop action projects aimed at fostering these skills, knowledge and competencies in the context of their own schools
- Evaluate outcomes of the projects



# Key Principles underpinning this project

- **Both** senior and middle leaders are involved in each school
- Principal (and Deputy Principal if appropriate) commit to engagement in 1:1 coaching
- School Leadership team commits to team coaching
- Action research project selected has a focus on developing leadership capacity
- One of the primary clusters must be one with teaching principals





# What roles do Middle Leaders occupy?

- Student focused role
- Administrative role
- Organisational role
- Supervisory role
- Staff Development role
- Strategic Role

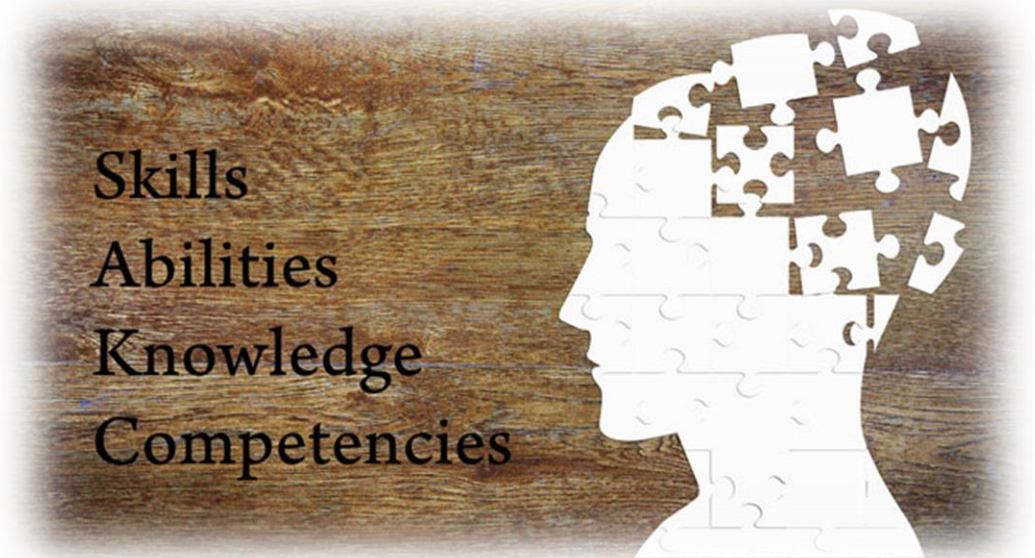
*( De Nobile 2018)*



# What skills/knowledge are essential for Middle Leaders?

- Leading effective pedagogy
- Leading the professional learning of colleagues
- Leading meetings
- Leading teams
- Communicating effectively
- Managing time
- Dealing with conflict
- Strategic planning

*(De Nobile 2018)*



# Competency Workshop Development

- Available asynchronously via an online platform
- Built in interactivity via forums and padlets etc.
- Interrogated at in school leadership meets and during cluster meetings

## Workshops

**Leading Effective Pedagogy**

**Leading Professional learning Communities**

**Leading Meetings**

**Leading Teams**

**Effective Communication**

**Manging Time**

**Conflict Resolution**

**Project Management**

# Emerging Themes – the positives



- Second level schools seeing a transition from administrative tasks to developing leadership roles
- Mentoring and Coaching becoming part of the narrative
- Clustering seen as collaborative learning networks
- Elevating the unique position of MLs – strong connection to practice
- Non positional leaders showing interest

# Emerging Themes – the challenges



- Covid 19
- Leadership policy needs significant mediation at school level
- Smaller Primary schools struggling
- TIME
- The discourse of leadership
- Standards ( Looking at Our School) seen as an inspection and interview tool

# Ongoing Evaluation

Professor  
Christine  
Forde

Formative

Summative

Final Report  
in  
February  
2023



# Go Raibh Maith Aгаibh

