

Rationale

Seminal research confirms that NAHT Aspire ILT is soundly grounded. Independent evaluation shows it to be impactful in relation to school improvement and the development of leaders and teachers. NAHT Aspire began as a three year pilot programme in 2013, sponsored by the DFE with a steering group including senior officials from the DFE, Ofsted, NCTL and the NGA. 31 primary schools worked in 4 networks. The programme has evolved as the most potent aspects have emerged and been refined. NAHT Aspire ILT has the same process of network & development days and coaching for and by school staff.

Research validating the methodology

A number of studies have reinforced the view that school improvement and the impact of CPD is dependent on working on multiple foci in an interrelated way e.g. leadership, establishing learners' basic skills, a good climate for learning, high aspirations, assessment and the use of data (Scheerens, 2004).

The largest scale study was conducted by Bryk et al (2010) in Chicago. They retrospectively analysed 100 elementary schools that had substantially improved versus 100 schools that had not over seven years. They hypothesised a framework of essential supports: school leadership, parent and community ties, school learning climate, professional capacity of the faculty, and instructional guidance. They concluded, *"schools that measured strong in all five supports were at least 10 times more likely than schools with just one or two strengths to achieve substantial gains in reading and math. Moreover, a sustained weakness in just one of these areas undermined virtually all attempts at improving student learning"*.

Research indicates that headteacher leadership alone is weakly associated with outcomes (EPPi, 2003) *"because schools are "loosely coupled" organisations where the ability to influence performance diminishes rapidly the further one is from the pupil."* (O'Shaughnessy et al, 2007). These studies reinforce the importance of leadership being distributed across the school.

Joyce and Showers (2002) highlighted four research proven constituents of effective training for teachers contrasting these with an ineffective model of sending teachers out of school on day courses. These are:

- exploring the theory or rationale for the new skills or strategies;
- modelling the new skills ideally in a setting closely approximate to the workplace;
- practice of the skill;
- peer coaching.

Our model consists of six integrated Components (see next section), embodies distributed leadership and operationalises the Joyce and Showers four constituents.

Research that underpins the components

Leading Learning & Teaching

At the centre of this is the Quality Framework for Learning & Teaching, a disaggregation of effective teaching captured in six elements, 37 themes with descriptors and associated behaviours associated with good and outstanding learning and teaching. It is based on a digest of guidance and literature about effective teaching and has since been cross checked with Hattie's (2009) authoritative meta-analysis.

A Language for Developing Leadership

The Quality Framework for Leadership was developed from research and resources related to personal leadership (e.g. Hay Group (2000), NCSL (2004), Day and Sammons (2013) and the Professional Standards for Headteachers (DFE, 2015)). These have been distilled into four elements with themes, descriptors and behaviours that capture good and outstanding leadership.

Foundations of learning

This is based on an analysis of research highlighting characteristics of learning associated with different types of outcomes. There is an emphasis on automaticity in the retrieval and application of essential knowledge, drawing out five principles for this type of learning:-

- Hierarchical progression
- Learning to fluency as well as accuracy
- Errorless rehearsal
- Spaced learning
- Interleaving old and new learning.

(Stebbins et al, 1977; Hattie, 2009)

A strategy called Fast Learning builds fluency in number facts, transcription and reading rate. This has a speedy impact, for example Year 4 learners at Blidworth Oaks school completing a randomised 10x10 addition fact grid reduced their item calculation time 16.8 to 3.3 seconds after seven weeks- a typical finding in NAHT Aspire.

Coaching for Growth

Lindon (2011) has reviewed the advantages and impact of coaching. Two specific approaches were found to be equally beneficial, one of which is used in this Component (G(oal), R(eality), O(ptions), W(hat)).

Putting Data to Work

The formative use of assessment data is a sine qua non, however, often data are used descriptively rather than to plan, adapt or intervene, which are the emphases in NAHT Aspire ILT.

Professional Learning Cycles- Achievement Teams

Timperley et al, (2007) undertook a meta-analysis of 97 studies that linked CPD with student outcomes. Their conclusion was that the most effective CPD involved teachers collectively and individually identifying important issues, becoming the drivers for acquiring the knowledge they need to solve them, monitoring the impact of their actions and adjusting their practice accordingly.

Achievement Team Meetings are protocol driven forums where teachers reflect on learner data, share knowledge and practices, commit to action and report on impact.

Direct Evaluation of NAHT Aspire

Derby University independently evaluated the NAHT Aspire pilot based on the first two years of the partnership (Neary et al, 2015). All the 31 participating schools were graded as Satisfactory/ RI in successive inspections. Key findings below confirm NAHT Aspire's impact on school improvement, leaders and teachers.

Direct impact on the schools and learners

- 63% of the Pilot schools that have been Ofsted inspected and graded Good in the course of NAHT Aspire (page 47).
(This has been replicated with a set of 20 schools nominated by Essex for NAHT Aspire in 2014 that fell into their category of the most at risk schools with a grade of 'Requires Improvement'. 12 were inspected and judged as 'Good' with another recently academised school regarded as prospectively 'Outstanding')
- Even given the significant national improvements in Key Stage 2 outcomes, the Pilot schools made about twice the improvement of schools nationally for both progress and attainment, with particularly strong gains in Mathematics at Level 5 (page 47)
- Half of the schools have shown a transformational improvement of 10% or more in the percentage of pupils attaining Level 4 or above for Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined (page 47)

Evaluation of the experience

- The feedback from the case study schools and the survey was overwhelmingly positive about their experiences and the impact on the whole school including the teachers, children and the wider community (90% of survey respondents felt NAHT Aspire had been successful in their school) (page 65)
- Schools reported that they are able to work 'smarter not harder' using tools inherent in the programme, such as the 2-6-2 meeting model (page 16)
- *'Network days have always been a pleasure to be on. Great ideas, really great atmosphere to work in and honest and constructive dialogue'* (illustrative quote, page 19)

Impact on leadership

- *'It has been excellent in pulling everyone together as a team in improving the school rather than it all being led by the senior leadership team- we all feel part of the process'* (illustrative quote, page 17)
- *'Most importantly I think the Head is brimming with enthusiasm and ideas and loves having her big team to work with'* (illustrative quote page 39)

Sustainability

- Schools believe the NAHT Aspire model will be sustainable in their schools in the long term - (92% of survey respondents agreed, though with concerns about staff changes) (page 55)

Bryk, S., Bender Sebring, P., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S. and Easton, J. (2010) *Organizing Schools for Improvement - Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Day, C. and Pamela Sammons, P. (2013), *Successful leadership: a review of the international literature*. Reading: CfBT Education Trust

EPPI (2003) A systematic review of the impact of school headteachers and principals on student outcomes. London: EPPI-Centre (Institute of Education, University of London)

Hay Group (2000) *Raising Achievement in Our Schools: Models of Excellence for Headteachers in Different Settings* [http://www3.nccu.edu.tw/~mujinc/teaching/9-101principal/refer9-1\(kpool-hay-models-of-excellence-parts-1-2\).pdf](http://www3.nccu.edu.tw/~mujinc/teaching/9-101principal/refer9-1(kpool-hay-models-of-excellence-parts-1-2).pdf)

Hattie, J. (2009) *Visible Learning*. London: Routledge.

Hutchison, J. (2016) *School inspection in England: Is there room to improve?* London: Education Policy Institute.

Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (2002) *Student achievement: Through staff development*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD

Lindon, J. (2011) *Creating a culture of coaching: upskilling the school workforce in times of change*. Nottingham: National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services

Neary, S., Dodd, V. and Radford, N. (2015) *NAHT Aspire Pilot Evaluation*. Derby: Derby University

O'Shaughnessy, J. (ed) (2007) *The leadership effect Can headteachers make a difference?* London: Policy Exchange

Scheerens, J. (2005) *Review of school and instructional effectiveness research*. United Nations Education Social and Cultural Organisation. (2005/ED/EFA/MRT/PI/44).

Stebbins, L.B., St. Pierre, R.G., Proper, E.C., Anderson, R.B., & Cerva, T.R. (1977). *Education as experimentation: A planned variation model (Vol IV-A)*. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates

Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H. and Fung, I. (2007) *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education.