

COMMON GOALS, COMMON WAYS PARTNERSHIP TOOLKIT

(By the Scottish partner of the project Common Goals Common Ways: Catherine McGlynn)

- A guide to forming effective partnerships in an educational setting.

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others to help?

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lead?

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit to aid partnership working was put together as part of a Leonardo da Vinci, Transfer of Innovation project, Common Goals, Common Ways. It is designed to be used as a workshop tool for those hoping to establish educational partnerships.

We will not give out a set of rules to be followed which will guarantee a successful partnership, as this would be impossible to do. Partnerships come in many different formats; they might be formal or informal and involve public and private organisations or individuals. Working in partnership can be difficult and it can use up time and resources therefore it is important that before setting up a partnership, those doing so are clear about their aims and objectives.

Partnership working can be very rewarding and we believe there are several important features of a good partnership. With this toolkit we hope to provide you with some of the skills necessary to establish your own successful educational partnership.

Using the Toolkit



When you see the Toolkit symbol, then you will have some work to do!

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WORKSHOP ORGANISERS

1. All of the following tasks can be done on an individual basis or as a group activity. If they are done with a group then they could be used as collaborative learning activities by allocating each of the participants a particular role to play and giving them a set of instructions for each task.
2. Divide the workshop participants into groups of 6. Tell them that they will all be given a specific task within the group but that everyone is responsible for the whole process and the result of the group.
3. Each group will present their findings/decisions to the whole workshop at the end of the activity.

ROLES

No 1 is the FACILITATOR. You organize the work of the group. You must read out the instructions or questions to the group and you make sure that everyone understands the task. You are the only one allowed to ask questions of the workshop leader, so the members must pass their questions on through you.

No 2 is the REPORTER. Your task is to make sure that everyone is involved in presenting the findings of your group at the end of the activity. You also have to present the names and the roles of the group members.

No 3 is the MATERIAL-MANAGER. Your role is to manage the materials. Your task is to collect any materials needed by your group and distribute these. You must also collect in the materials at the end of the task.

No 4 is the TIME PLANNER. Your task is to make sure that your group keeps to the time allocated for the task. You must let them know if they are running out of time or in danger of finishing too early.

No 5 is the HARMONISER. Your task is to resolve any conflict within the group. You should encourage the members to participate and give positive feedback to the participants.

No 6 is the MODERATOR. Your task is to make sure that everyone is given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion and you should encourage everyone to participate and make sure everyone listens to each other.

1. PARTNERSHIP BASICS

1.1 What is a partnership?

The UK Audit Commission (1998)¹ defined partnership working as:

"A joint working arrangement where the partners:

- *are otherwise independent bodies*
- *agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal*
- *create a new organisational structure or process to achieve this goal*
- *plan and implement a joint programme*
- *share information, risks and rewards"*

¹ Audit Commission (1998). *A Fruitful Partnership*.

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/A190CA25-7A7E-47D1-BCAB-373A86B709C0/A%20Fruitful%20Partnership.pdf>

1.2 Why work in partnership?

The most important feature of a successful partnership is to have a common purpose. Therefore it is worth considering if working in partnership might bring benefits to your school.

Could working in partnership:

- Bring extra resources to the school?
- Provide access to different expertise?
- Allow the learners to gain additional experiences?
- ❖ Allow the teachers to gain additional experiences?
- Deal with educational issues more effectively?
- Bring in external funding for shared priorities?
- Share good practice and communication between organisations?

Before setting up a partnership you must be clear about what you want to achieve and how the partnership will add value to the work of the individual partners.

'An effective educational partnership is a dynamic collaborative process ... that brings mutual though not necessarily symmetrical benefits to the parties engaged in the partnership. Partners share ownership of the projects. Their relationship is based on respect, trust, transparency and reciprocity.'

(The Africa Unit. UK/Africa partnerships in HE/FE, 2010)

1.3 Some successful partnership case studies

- **THE TITLE**

Vandalism in the Community – to make learners aware of the effect of litter and vandalism in local area and to look at what laws affect them and how laws are made.

- **THE PARTNERS**

Two lawyers who work for the local government
A Litter Officer who works for the local government
A Community Policeman

- **THE PROJECT**

A group of learners looked round their local area and listed any instances of litter or vandalism that they saw (they used charts, graphs and calculations). They held a debate to discuss the impact of vandalism and presented ideas on how to deal with this. The lawyers held workshops with the group and they found out how laws are made and suggested their own laws to deal with vandalism. The Litter Officer discussed how the problems of littering are dealt with and the learners collected litter around the school for a week and then created litter sculptures. They put together a campaign at the end of the project suggesting ways of

dealing with vandalism and litter and they presented this at an assembly within the school and to the Community Policeman. This project improved literacy, numeracy, communication, art and citizenship skills.

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- **THE TITLE**

It's a Wonderful Life – to make learners aware of differences in background and culture and to raise awareness of the unique lifestyle of children from traveller families, who can miss out on schooling as their families travel around the country.

- **THE PARTNERS**

Children from Occupational Travellers/Showman families

A Photographer from a Community Arts Project

A teacher who specialises in working with 'Interrupted Learners'

- **THE PROJECT**

A school in which 10% of its learners come from Occupational Traveller/Showman families (families who work in fairgrounds and travel around the country) ran a project with some of the children from these families. They wanted to share their identity and culture with the rest of their class and to overcome misconceptions about their lifestyle. The project was to show this through the eyes of the children so the photographer taught them skills in digital photography and the children took photographs of their families, interviewed them about their lifestyle and work and researched the history and heritage of travelling fairs. They put together the photographs and writings and made T shirts with their photographs and presented their findings to the rest of the class. The project improved their skills of communication, literacy, geography and ICT.

- **THE TITLE**

Food and Drink Challenge – to make learners aware of the food and drinks industry and to provide them with skills related to the world of work.

- **THE PARTNERS**

A local food and drinks manufacturer
A Careers Officer

- **THE PROJECT**

The learners within a school carry out a number of challenges related to the food and drinks industry. This can be done with one group or several groups of learners. For one challenge they work in small groups and create a menu for a healthy and cost effective meal, done within a limited budget. They then present this to a panel of judges made up of representatives from the manufacturer, the school and the Careers Officer and the winning menu is prepared by the learners and served up to the workforce in the local business. Another challenge is to create a new soft drink (learners are given different categories to choose from – organic, environmentally friendly, healthy etc) and design appropriate packaging. They have to calculate costs and create a recipe and this is presented to the judging panel. These challenges cover a number of curriculum areas including food and hospitality, the world of work, literacy, numeracy, art and ICT.

- **THE TITLE**

Health and Wellbeing Days – to make learners aware of how to improve their own health and wellbeing and of careers related to these industries.

- **THE PARTNERS**

Local food and drinks companies

Businesses who supply products and resources to the school (to provide prizes or free samples of products)

Beauty Therapy, Hairdressing and Complementary Therapy students

Health and Fitness students

Food and Hospitality students

- **THE PROJECT**

The learners organise a Health and Wellbeing Day where they provide a variety of activities related to this theme eg taster sessions in a number of sports, mini beauty, hairdressing and complementary treatments, demonstrations of healthy cooking. Representatives from health and wellbeing industries (Beauty and Hairdressing Salons, Sports Centres, Food and Drinks Companies) have stands where they can advertise their services and also provide advice on careers in their industries. The learners have to decide on which activities they will provide, what resources they need and must produce marketing materials to advertise the day. They use skills of literacy, numeracy, communication, ICT and subject related skills.

- **THE TITLE**

Transition Event – to help learners move more easily from one stage of education to the next.

- **THE PARTNERS**

Primary School

Secondary School

Further Education College

Local businesses provide sponsorship and prizes

Local sports clubs

- **THE PROJECT**

These events are held at the end of the school year with a group of primary children who are moving on to secondary school. They attend for 3 days of activities at the secondary school which focus on the different opportunities they will have at this next stage of education. Some of the activities include competitions in mini sports, enterprise, mad scientist, new inventions and creative cookery. These competitions are run by students from the secondary school and the college and members of the sports clubs. The learners are put into teams and gain points through each of the competitions and prizes are awarded to the winners. The learners use skills across a range of subject areas and improve their confidence in dealing with transition.

**TASK 1**

1.4 Partnership Tasks

You might like to consider some ways in which your own school could benefit from partnership working. Consider the above examples of successful partnership projects. Each of the partners saw some benefit to their organisation from their involvement in these projects.

Would any of these make a useful project within your school? Select one of the case studies and explain how you could run a version of this in your school. What partners would you involve? The form in Task 5 could be used for this.

A partnership does not have to involve outside agencies, could you work with partners from within your own school?

- Other classes?
- Other teachers?
- Non-teaching staff?
- Any others ?

If the partnership needs additional funding or resources, can you think of ways you could obtain these?

- Donations from parents?
- Local businesses?
- Fundraising activities?
- Any others ?

Here are some examples of some projects you might want to consider for partnership working:

- The eco-friendly school
- Vocational taster courses
- Skills competitions
- Enterprise events
- The healthy school
- The active school
- Careers events
- Collaborative classrooms

Here are some examples of other agencies you might want to work in partnership with:

- Local government
- Educational institutions
- Employers
- School suppliers
- Social partners
- Civil groups
- Charities
- Parents

1.5 Some thoughts on partnership working

If you have not worked in a partnership before then it can be a daunting prospect, but the main point to bear in mind is that it is important to be clear about what you are trying to achieve. If you have a project that you think will benefit your learners and your school, you must be realistic about what is actually possible to achieve and be willing to work openly with partners from other organisations.

- ✿ Do not plan something which is very complex and involves a lot of partners until you have already built up a *good network* of helpful contacts.
- ✿ *Start small* with one group of learners and one or two partners.
- ✿ Before you approach your school managers and then the potential partners, have a very *clear written plan* of what the project is all about (some of the following tasks will help you to do this).
- ✿ Set *realistic timescales* for the project and remember that other organisations do not work to the same timetables as a school, partners might want to meet after the school day for example or at certain times of the year they might not be available as they are very busy.
- ✿ Make sure you have *open channels of communication*; the partnership will only be successful if you establish a relationship based on trust and communicate regularly with your partners. It is vital to keep them informed of what they are expected to do and agree well in advance what their input should be and when they will be involved. It is useful to set up an online platform, for example the free application Wiggio, to communicate and

share materials, rather than just using email. It is important to check with your partners how they would prefer to communicate, to establish trust and openness.

- ✿ *Expertise* can be more useful than resources and you do not necessarily need financial input from your partners (even though schools always want more resources). Your first approach to your partners should not include a shopping list of items you want for your project, start by asking for their time and expertise and you might well find that they are happy to also contribute resources.
- ✿ When you are talking to your partners keep in mind the *mutual benefits* of your project. Businesses like to get involved in their local community as this can provide good publicity for them or it can present a good image of them to potential employees (your learners). Representatives of other agencies might use their involvement in educational partnerships as a staff development opportunity.
- ✿ When the project is complete, *communicate its success* (school website, local newspaper etc) your partners will want to be praised for their contributions to your project.

The most successful partnerships are where good personal relationships are built between the partners based on a mutual understanding of the project itself, open and clear channels of communication and with a shared sense of purpose.

One thing that is vital for successful partnership working is the allocation of time – this is something that teachers never have enough of. You must be clear before you start on your project that you will be able to allocate enough time to put together a partnership, to work closely, and to communicate regularly with your partners.

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You should think about what kind of partnership is best for you:

Informal – this could be working with others to exchange knowledge or expertise. The aim of the partnership might be to consult with each other, debate issues and build trust between organisations, rather than to achieve a set objective.

Formal – this might be where you make a firm agreement with others to contribute a set amount of time or resources towards a particular aim.

- This could be a **strategic partnership** where your aim is to achieve a common objective.

- You might decide that a **networking forum** is the most useful type of partnership where the aims of the partnership are decided by the group members.

In every type of partnership, the members all need to be clear about the aims and objectives and what they are committing themselves to do.

Look back at the examples of successful partnerships detailed above and consider what kind of partnerships might have been formed for each of these?



TASK 2

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Successful learning opportunities are:	AGREE	DISAGREE	IF YOU DISAGREE, WHY?
Interactive and interdisciplinary, not passive or subject based			
Learner centred rather than teacher led			
Involve collaborative learning rather than individual learning			
With groups are made up of learners with different levels of			

ability			
Linked to new ideas and concepts, not just previous knowledge			

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If you agree with any of the above strategies, can you think of a project or activity with your group of learners which could involve some of these strategies?



The project or activity:

The strategies that could be used:

According to James Comer, a child psychiatrist at Yale University, academic development cannot be separated from a learner's social and cultural background, therefore it is vital to have the involvement of parents in the school.

Cole, R (Ed.) (2008) 2nd Edition. *Educating Everybody's Children: Diverse Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners*. Virginia, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

- **In what ways could you involve the parents of your learners in your project or activity?**

**Would working in partnership be good for your school**

1. <i>What project or task do I have in mind that might benefit from organising a partnership?</i>
2. <i>What needs or aims do I hope to meet?</i>
3. <i>Is a partnership the best way to meet these needs or aims?</i>
4. <i>Who will get involved in the partnership from my school?</i>
5. <i>Will being involved benefit them in terms of staff development? If so in what way?</i>
6. <i>Which other organisations will get involved in the partnership?</i>

7. What will be the benefit for the partner organisation/s?

Now consider, what barriers might there be to effective partnership working?



TASK 4

1.

2.

3.

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Some examples of barriers to effective partnership working:

- ❖ Different organisational cultures
- ❖ Different expectations of partners
- ❖ Lack of commitment at a senior level
- ❖ Lack of communication between the partners
- ❖ Lack of trust between the partners
- ❖ Objectives not set out clearly at the start
- ❖ Insufficient time allocated by the partners
- ❖ Staff changes affecting the partnership
- ❖ Previous failed attempts at partnership

How could these barriers be overcome?

2 Partnership Planning



TASK 5

2.1 Who are the partners?

Before starting a partnership, decide on the *WHY? WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE?*

Outline your project or plan:

WHY would a partnership help this?

WHO should be involved in this partnership?

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WHAT needs to be done to involve them?

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WHEN should this happen?

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WHERE do I start?



2.2 What is the Purpose of the Partnership?

TASK 6

It is important to be very clear about what you want to gain by working in partnership. Once you have decided to put together a partnership, make sure that you can answer the following questions:

Q: What is the partnership trying to achieve?	A:
Q: Why is a partnership the best way of meeting this need?	A:

Q: What added value will the partnership provide?	A:
Q: What will the partnership deliver?	A:

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It is also important that the roles within the partnership are agreed in advance.

Q: Who will take the lead in the partnership?	A:
Q: What will the lead partner be responsible for?	A:
Q: Will all partners be involved throughout the project?	A:
Q: What communication channels will be used?	A:

Once you have identified the other partners you wish to work with it will be very helpful if you arrange time for the partners to get to know each other so that they understand and respect the differences they have as well agreeing with each other. This time to build good relationships can be vital to the success of the partnership as it allows each of the partners the opportunity to have a say in what the partnership hopes to achieve. If the partnership is a formal one, it is useful to put together a written agreement.

2.3 An example of a Partnership Agreement

Partner Organisations

This section should detail the organisation/s involved with names and contact details and a description of each organisation.

The Aims and Objectives

This section should state: We agree to work together to (explain the purpose of the partnership)

Each partner will contribute in the following ways:

PARTNER A

PARTNER B

PARTNER C

Roles and Responsibilities

This section should detail the roles and responsibilities of each of the members of the partnership.

Resources

This section should detail which resources will be required and who will be responsible for providing these.

Communication

This section should detail how the partnership will communicate, whether regular meetings will be held and if so how often.

Review, Revision and Exiting

This section should detail how often the partnership will be reviewed and say how performance will be evaluated and how the partnership should be ended.

Signed

..... (date) on behalf of Partner A

..... (date) on behalf of Partner B

..... (date) on behalf of Partner C

Some questions to ask before putting a partnership agreement together:




1. What will the partnership achieve that the partners cannot achieve on their own?
2. What arrangements are there for agreeing and reviewing the main objectives of the partnership?
3. What activities will the partners be involved in?
4. Will different members have a different status and how will decisions be taken?
5. Who will set the principles and ground rules of the partnership and how will meetings be organised?
6. If there are resources and finance involved, how will these be monitored and controlled?
7. How will possible disputes or complaints be dealt with?
8. What information will need to be shared and how will this be done?
9. When will any reviews of the partnership take place?
10. How will the success/failure of the partnership be measured?



TASK 7



TASK 8

ARE YOU READY TO START? CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?			
Project Title?			
Partners involved?			
Overview of project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you want to achieve? Why is this relevant to your learners? 			
Detailed breakdown of costs and/or resources?			
Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where will the project take place? What will the learners do? What will the staff do? What will the other partners do? What communication channels will be used? 			
Benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For learners? For staff? 			

• For other partners?			
How will the project be evaluated?			
How will the outcomes be shared?			

3 ASSESSING PERFORMANCE

Here are some examples of checklists which can help you to determine the strengths and weaknesses of your partnership and work on ways to improve it.

If you are holding regular meetings you can use these with the partnership group, otherwise each partner should complete the checklist at set agreed times and the lead partner should collate the results, compare them and share with the other partners.

3.1 Assessment Checklist

By allocating a score to each answer, this checklist can be used as a review document.

QUESTION	NO (1)	YES (2) needs improving	YES (3)	ACTION REQUIRED	NOTES
Section A: Background					
A1 Does the partnership have a clear vision of what it wants to achieve?					
A2 Is there clear leadership and does everyone understand their role?					
A3 Is the structure clear and are their appropriate documents to record this?					
A4 Is there adequate administrative support?					

A5 Are there sufficient resources?					
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Section B: Partners					
B1 Are the different organisational cultures being considered?					
B2 Is there commitment from a senior level?					
B3 Does the partnership have enough skills to meet its aims?					
Section C: Communication					
C1 Is there good communication within the partnership?					
C2 Are meetings effective?					
C3 Is the work of the partnership being communicated to					

others?					
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Section D: Evaluation					
D1 Have clear performance targets been set?					
D2 Are the partnership arrangements reviewed regularly?					
D3 Is there an agreed end point to the partnership?					
D4 How is progress being monitored and reported?					
Date of review:	Total Score:		Date of next review:		

4 IMPROVING PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

It is important to allow time to review the performance of your partnership and to make sure that any problems are dealt with at any early stage. Following each review, consideration should be given to any improvements which need to be made.

4.1 Improvement Checklist

Is the partnership being run with an effective structure and adequate support and resources to deliver its objectives?

	Yes	Partially	No	Don't Know	
1. Does the partnership have a good structure which supports decision-making and delivers outcomes?					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the roles and responsibilities clear? • Are decision-making processes clear and understood by all those involved?
2. Are the right people involved at the appropriate level of the partnership?					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are members of the partnership able to give enough time? • Are members of the partnership able to take decisions on behalf of their organisations?
3. Are meetings well run?					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are meetings useful and productive?

4. Is there sufficient administration and support for the partnership?					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the partnership have effective communication channels?
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5. Are there sufficient financial and staff resources to enable the partnership to meet its aims and objectives?					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do partner organisations contribute resources to the partnership? • Does the partnership have access to the relevant skills and expertise? • Is the partnership successful in identifying and external resources?
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4.2 Plan for Improvement

The lead partner, following each review and after identifying improvements required, should decide on a plan of action.

What action is needed	What is the intended outcome	Resources required	Responsible person/group	Deadlines

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4.3 Action Planning

The review process does not have to be time consuming or complex. If meetings are not held regularly, partners could still be asked to communicate any concerns or suggestions for improvement and the lead partner can then circulate an action plan.

Key Findings	Actions Needed

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5 THE END OF THE PARTNERSHIP

There will come a time when the partnership will end, perhaps for one of the following reasons:

- The partnership has not been successful.
- The partnership has lost direction.
- The project itself has ended.
- The partnership has been successful and is no longer required.

The partnership might need to be reformed rather than ended, perhaps with different members.

After each review of the partnership, it is important to ask if the work of the partnership has been done, or is there still more to do. If there is no more to do, or no more than can be done, then the partnership must come to an end. This should be done sensitively as some of the partners will have invested a great deal of time and effort and this should be

recognised. The work of the partnership should not be forgotten however and a final report should contain information on the following:

- What did the partnership achieve?
- What lessons did we learn from partnership working?
- What benefits did the school gain from this partnership?
- How can the successes of this partnership be shared?

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6 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Add any local or national resources which teachers might find useful.

UK Resources

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/welfare/partnershipworking>

<http://www.equal-works.com/resources/contentfiles/576.pdf>

<http://strengtheningnonprofits.org/resources/guidebooks/Partnerships.pdf>

<http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/guides/working-partnership>

<http://www.partnerships.org.uk/pguide/pships.htm>