

COMMUNITY NETWORKS

“The writers, artists and musicians working in Florence in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries had no idea that they were part of what is now known as the Renaissance. But through networks, shared knowledge and influence they individually created a climate that allowed a new creativity to flourish. The work that schools are doing on new approaches to learning, working with the community, developing relationships with other schools, rethinking school roles and relationships all point to radical changes in practice which have the potential to become emergent policy.”

Professor John West-Burnham, London Institute: From School to System; New Horizons for Educational Leadership. SHA Headlines Nov 2004.

STRENGTHENING NETWORKS

Through Year 4 of the project and particularly in Year 5, ACE and IMPACT have sought to develop the concept of “community networks”.

Our Fourth Annual Conference, February 2005, demonstrated an enthusiasm and commitment to:

- The growth of networks and clusters
- The growth of the partnership network
- Raising standards through family and community engagement
- Raising the quality of effective learning through shared practice

It also reinforced the essential characteristic of EAZ being a “school-owned” project and the “urgent need to define a strategy that was to lead towards 2006 and see 2006 as a transition and not an end.

The conference report and subsequent comments also raised the issue of networks developing for a variety of purposes. For example:

- The Primary Strategy Learning Networks
- Behaviour Improvement Programme
- Leadership Incentive Grant/ 14 – 19 clusters
- Extended Schools

Subsequent to the conference, EAZ Executive has developed a programme to prepare for future collaboration:

- The extension of “Creative Learning/ Collaborative Leadership” into 2006/ 07 ([See Creative Learning Link](#))
- The establishment of an “external funding network”. With the conclusion of matched funding, EAZ is searching for external funding to support school priorities. Of necessity, a network has been formed so that funding can be sought for post 2006 also. All EAZ schools belong to this network.

- At an Executive Day, held 21st April 2005, EAZ was asked to negotiate with schools to produce a community network model(s). Reflecting school priorities and the value they attach to the collaborative process, this model will:
 - Create an infrastructure that will support collaboration and widen learning opportunities
 - Act as a resource for other clusters/ networks to which schools will belong
 - Pilot a management/ governance structure
 - Pilot specific roles
 - Create a partnership network
 - Create an audit of need
 - Provide quality assurance

The purpose of the pilot will be to create a research programme and findings report so that schools (and other interested parties) can make informed judgements and decisions on future collaboration post 2006.

TIMESCALE

EAZ Executive will consider proposals for the pilot community network at their meeting in June 2005 with a view to decisions by Governors at their next round of full governing body meetings in September/ October 2005. It is anticipated that an infrastructure for a community network(s) could be in place for April 2006.