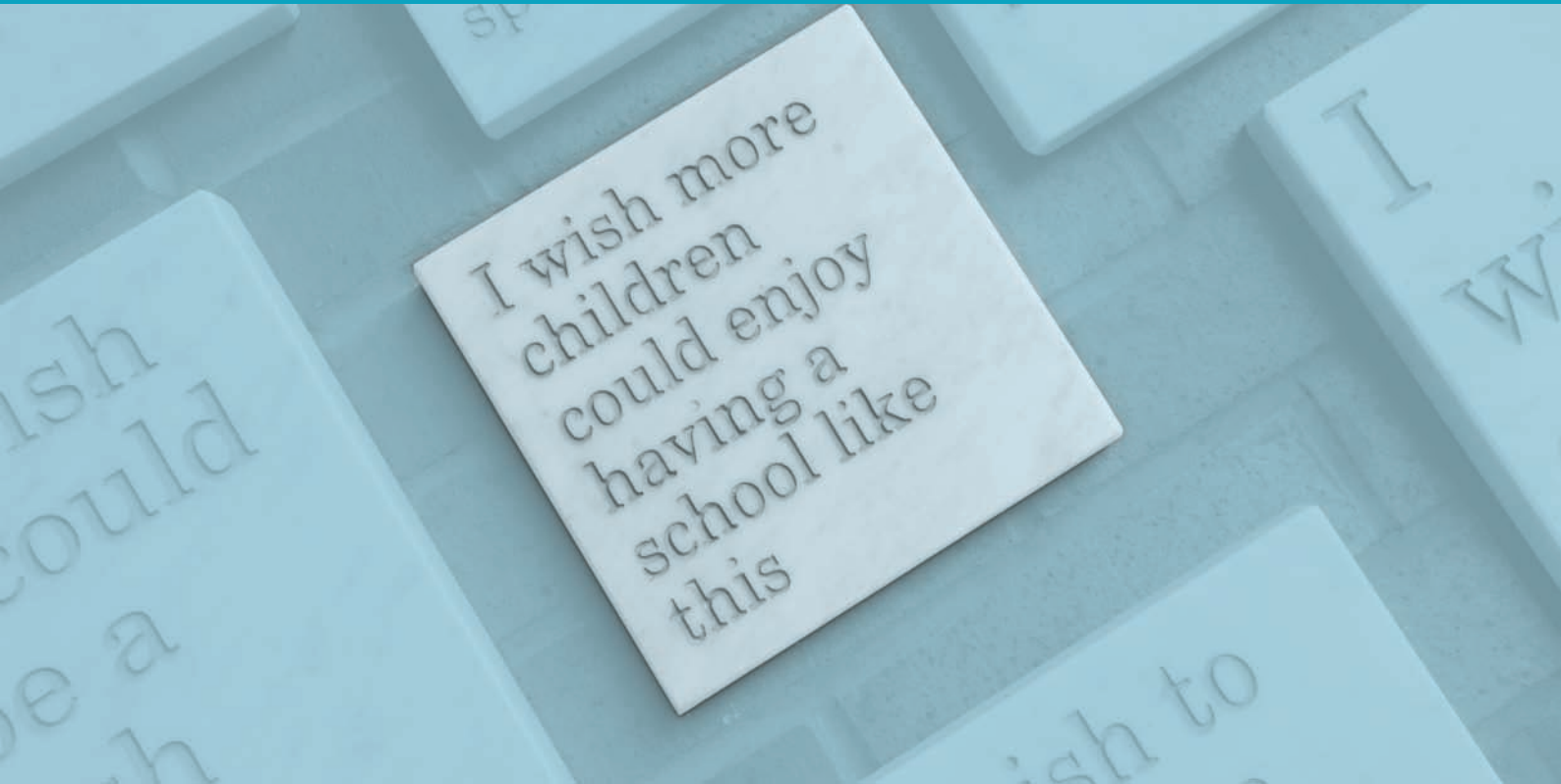


21st Century Learning Journeys: No Time for Hesitancy



I wish more
children
could enjoy
having a
school like
this

21st Century Learning Alliance – who we are

The 21st Century Learning Alliance was founded in 2006. Professor Tim Brighouse and Sir Mike Tomlinson lead the Alliance.

Organisations and government agencies including Becta, Futurelab, IDeA, National College for School Leadership (NCSL), Northern Grid for Learning (NGfL), Ofsted, Partnership for Schools (P4S), QCA, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) are represented on the Alliance.

Membership of the group also includes:
Keith Cotgrave, Head Teacher, Longfield School, Darlington
Caroline Hook, Director, Oracle
Glenn Mayoh, Head Teacher, Abbs Cross School and Arts College
Martin Ripley, Independent Consultant
Nick Stacey, Director, RM
Jim Wynn, Director, Cisco

With additional thanks to the following for their help in producing this booklet:

Gavin Ball, Deputy Head Teacher, Gordano School
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Tony Gill, Head Teacher, Headworth Lane Primary School
Simon Jackson, Assistant Head Teacher, Farmors School
Steve Moseley, Assistant Head Teacher, Ashton Park School
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Introducing the 21st Century Learning Alliance

For many of us working in education and industry, it's become a matter of increasing urgency that our learning communities have the best possible chance to prepare young people for the unknown social, environmental and economic challenges ahead. After all, many of the children born today will live well into the latter part of the 21st century, possibly the 22nd. Against this backdrop it is clear that education must evolve to meet better the challenges that young people will face. Yes, we should sustain the best values and practice of 'traditional' learning but we should also take bold action to provide an education fit for the 21st century.

Some progress is taking place and can be seen recently in such programmes as the Every Child Matters agenda, the recently announced Children's Plan and primary curriculum review, secondary curriculum reforms, moves to personalise the curriculum, and the rebuilding of the school estate in the Building Schools of the Future (BSF) and Primary Capital (PCP) programmes. But that progress needs to continue apace from both the centre and, importantly, from within learning communities themselves.

That's why we've come together to form this group. *The 21st Century Learning Alliance* has been founded by key national organisations involved in education, including Becta, NCSL, Northern Grid for Learning, Ofsted, Partnerships

for Schools, QCA, SSAT, TDA and IDeA. *The 21st Century Learning Alliance* is unique in both its membership and in its collective knowledge, skills, experience and networks. In a way, it's an example of the way all of us will work in the future: in connected and collaborative partnerships.

So how will *The 21st Century Learning Alliance* operate? Well, at the very least, we will debate difficult and sensitive issues in an open and honest manner. We will contribute to national and local discussions in a similarly frank and knowledgeable way. Our aim is to stimulate improvement and change through contributing expert, evidence-based challenge and advice – for key educational organisations, for practitioners and for industry. Our objective is to make 21st century learning a reality – sooner rather than later.

In particular, you can expect the group to:

- ▶ Find and publish effective and innovative practice.
- ▶ Campaign within government for 21st century learning.
- ▶ Develop and respond to a sophisticated understanding of the technological needs of learners and learning communities in support of learning.
- ▶ Challenge industry to bring to market innovations that support 21st century learning and help learning communities to deliver teaching and learning.

- ▶ Create a network of teachers and school leaders, enabling them to support each other in developing 21st century learning.
- ▶ Promote the development of 21st century learning within learning communities.

This short pamphlet is an introduction to the work of the group. With reference to that last bullet point, it's also a strong call to action for our leaders in learning communities and in government to respond to the urgency of the situation and set out on the journey towards 21st century learning. The following pages outline the need for 21st century learning, offer a simple way for learning communities to begin implementation, and provide some examples of this in action. We intend that this pamphlet is the start of robust and profitable dialogue and debate.

Tim Brighouse, Mike Tomlinson

Why 21st Century Learning Journeys?

There's an old joke in which a lost traveller stops and asks for directions from a local farmer. "If I were you," answers the farmer, "I wouldn't start from here." Like the traveller, learning communities on their journeys into the 21st century do not have the luxury of beginning at some clean and fresh starting point. Learning communities are working within the context of a

“ Individuals who can solve problems, who can think critically and creatively, and who can communicate and collaborate – these are the people who will succeed. ”

rigorous assessment and accountability framework, within budget constraints and within (often) conflicting opinions and expectations. Above all, schools are mindful of the moral purpose to enable young people, whatever their background, to enjoy learning and achieving so that they can contribute to an increasingly just and better society. Against this background, there is a strong and increasingly compelling need for all learning communities to set out on this journey to 21st century learning. Because, as most serious observers agree, it's clear that we

are living in a time of great cultural, technological and economic change. This change is happening at a global level and at a rapid and accelerating pace. We can see this in the developing economic and intellectual power of countries such as China and India, the restructuring of the UK economy, and the explosion in jobs centred on service, care, creativity or information. The importance and urgency of responding to the scope and pace of this is clear – but how?

On this journey, learning communities in the 21st century will need to transform themselves. An unchanging curriculum in a fast-changing world is a *non sequitur*. That does not mean abandoning everything of the past. Literacy and numeracy will remain fundamental in the 21st century as they have in the past. Learning communities will continue to demand academic rigour and high expectations. Fundamental will be the need to pass on to the next generation those things we value and have learned over the centuries. There is also a duty to extend this rigour and these expectations in order to prepare young people for the 21st century, for new literacies, for new skills and for relevant competences. What we propose, therefore, are journeys of sustainable education where change and development meet the needs of the present while at the same time building the ability of future generations to meet their

contemporary and future challenges. It's a process of change that will require careful management by learning communities.

It is impossible to second-guess the future but it is possible to suggest the kind of skills, aptitudes and competences that young learners should start to acquire and develop today. Young people will need specific skills to carry them successfully through life and the variety of careers it's likely they will have; skills such as flexibility, adaptability, self-actualisation, resilience, accountability, responsibility, and the ability to work with and show respect for others. Continuous learning will be an essential part of life in the 21st century to an extent it has not been in the past. So also will be the ability to innovate. Individuals who can solve problems, who can think critically and creatively, and who can communicate and collaborate – these are the people who will

“ To survive in the 21st century, it is vital that all students become proficient readers and fluent working with maths. ”

“ We are living in a time of great cultural, technological and economic change ... happening at a global level and at a rapid and accelerating pace. ”

succeed. In an information age, a critical attribute will be to discriminate, evaluate and synthesise information in print, media or information and communication technologies. Encouraging enterprise, healthy lifestyles and sustainability will be an important part of the learning focus. A developed sense of personal and civic responsibility will be vital characteristics too.

It sounds as if our expectations are high – and they are. Young people themselves have equally high expectations of the support and encouragement they will receive. To support learners and achieve these outcomes, the 21st century learning community will need to make available a wider experience than can be achieved solely within traditional subjects, lesson structures and single institutions. Learning communities will provide an entire planned learning experience that not only includes lessons but also extended school days and out-of-school activities. The 21st century learning community will make greater

use of flexible and non-standard timetabling, communications and collaboration technology, and a variety of staff roles. It's likely that 21st century learning communities will work with other organisations to develop partnerships beyond the school. The 21st century learning community will develop staff that is proud of its expertise, imagination and enthusiasm, and committed to its own personal and professional development. Learning communities of the 21st century will be active too in supporting the increasing expectations of 21st century learners to participate meaningfully in the shape and direction of their own learning.

We are not alone in our vision of 21st century learning. In countries around the globe, organisations are wrestling with the same issues and coming to similar conclusions, for example New Zealand's *Secondary Futures - Hoenga Auaha Taiohi*¹ project or in the United States, *The Partnership for 21st Century Skills*². In this country, the QCA is developing its curriculum *Big Picture*³ while the RSA's *Opening Minds*⁴ initiative has established many instances of emerging effective practice. That's why we are intellectually and morally convinced that the journey to creating a learning community appropriate for the 21st century is both necessary and realistic. It is also achievable – and it begins from where you are now.

A 21st century learning community will:

- ▶ Provide a wider experience than can be achieved solely within traditional subjects, lesson structures and single institutions.
- ▶ Provide an entire planned learning experience that not only includes lessons but also extended school days and out-of-school activities.
- ▶ Make greater use of flexible and non-standard timetabling.
- ▶ Make greater use of communications and collaboration technology.
- ▶ Make greater use of a variety of staff roles.
- ▶ Work with other organisations to develop partnerships beyond the school.
- ▶ Develop staff that is proud of its expertise, imagination and enthusiasm, and committed to its own personal and professional development.
- ▶ Support the increasing expectations of 21st century learners to participate meaningfully in the shape and direction of their own learning.

1: www.secondaryfutures.co.nz/

2: www.21stcenturyskills.org/

3: www.qca.org.uk/qca_5856.aspx

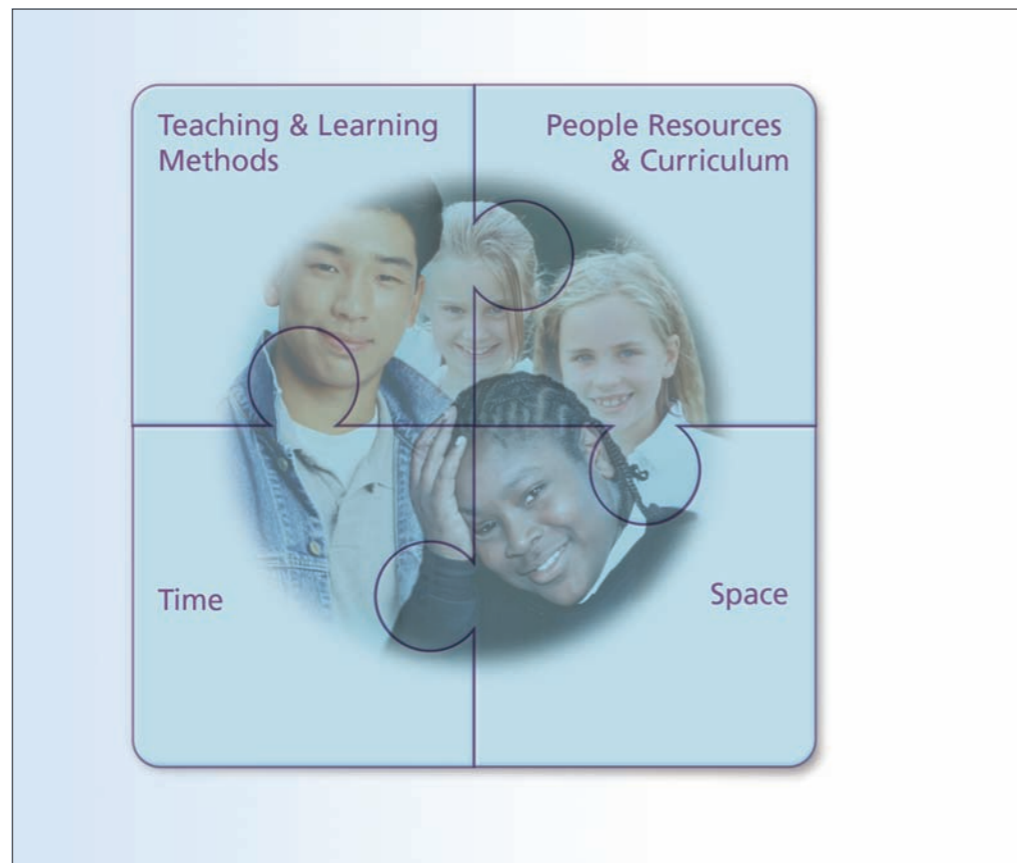
4: www.thersa.org/newcurriculum/

Steps on the Learning Journey – Managing Your Assets

Perhaps you are thinking, ‘So what? How does this affect me?’ In the remainder of this document we suggest some ways in which your school and local community could take manageable steps towards creating 21st century learning for all your young people. In the following model, we suggest four assets for 21st century learning. These assets are the working and intellectual capital that the learning community has at its disposal. By managing the assets appropriately it’s possible to move towards creating a 21st century learning community. These assets are:

Teaching & Learning Methods

There’s a rightful place for passionate didactic whole-class teaching but there are many other methods which schools should be using too if we want young people to become independent, collaborative and creative people. There must also be opportunity for independent learning; discovery-based learning; problem-based learning; and collaborative learning. Pupils should be involved in: independent, paired and group work; peer-to-peer learning; making effective use of textbooks; research; accelerated learning techniques; presentations; ‘hot seating’ and role play; ICT; music and drama; art and craftwork; audio-visual and display work; field trips; and more. Ensuring a full set of methods and activities to meet the needs of learners and the aims of the curriculum will be a feature of 21st century



education. Teaching and learning methods are the strongest intellectual assets of any learning community.

People, Resources & Curriculum

A key characteristic of the 21st century learning community will be in the value it attaches to its entire staff and professional development. It will

foster an ethos of professional research, collegiate cooperation and continuous improvement. From outside the learning community, enthusiastic experts in the arts, sport, science and mathematics will be a normal part of the planned curriculum experience; as will active parental involvement and parent learning - particularly in the primary phase. Integrated into

the life of the learning community will be pupil mentors, pupil coaches, local businesses, local agencies and local communities. Secure information and communication technologies will be available to pupils and teachers in a safe and timely manner, alongside library resources and ‘traditional’ teaching and learning materials. The learning community of the 21st century will put the learner at the heart of its work. The planned curriculum experience will focus on the learner, support inclusion and respond to pupil voice. Differentiated provision and improved achievement monitoring will mean that the progress of children with special educational needs, for example looked-after-children, will be carefully managed. It will enable all pupils to build a strong foundation in English and mathematics and to learn the application of subject disciplines to the real world. Learning skill development will be as important as knowledge acquisition. Offering a more tailored and personalised approach to learning, the curriculum will develop the skills and the personal qualities that will be essential in the 21st century.

Time

Time is, perhaps, the scarcest of resources but an important characteristic of a 21st century learning community will be seen in its willingness to manage time – and its proficiency in doing so. The regular timetabled curriculum, a feature of many of today’s schools, will be enhanced by

planned and evaluated opportunities for extended learning over days or weeks. Lesson-length and class sizes will be appropriate to the learner and the activity, for example in focused shorter revision lessons or extended task-based sessions. It will be usual for pupils to be assessed at an age appropriate to their learning rather than their key stage. Pupils will be entitled to access to learning before and after-school in both physical and online settings with assignments and extension activities developing their school-based learning.

Space

Learning spaces in the 21st century learning community will not only be safe, secure, welcoming and inspirational but also appropriate for the type of teaching and learning practices intended for them. Other learning spaces will be essential too: the outdoor environment, work placements, field and exchange trips will be a regular part of the learning environment for all pupils.

A focus on just one of these assets will help your school to move forward on its journey to 21st century learning, as the following schools have done.

Assets in Action



Teaching & Learning Methods

Traditionally, the pupil's role has been to listen to and learn from the expert teacher. Today, knowledge is widespread and instantly accessible. Shouldn't teaching recognise that fact and seize the opportunity to actively engage pupils in learning? At Ashton Park School in Bristol, Assistant Head Teacher Steve Moseley is pioneering, through the Enquiring Minds¹ programme, an approach to teaching and learning that draws on the individual interests

and ideas of the pupil. In addition to the traditional role, teachers here are also experts in coaching, learning and supporting pupils with independent research, critical thinking skills and communicative skills. This helps pupils engage more deeply with their ideas, research and findings. It's a challenging approach for the pupils. They have to be active learners, need to work well with others and take responsibility for their learning – all essential skills for the 21st century.

At St Mark's Church of England Aided Primary School², developing thinking skills is a key focus. The school chose Physical Education and School Sport (PESS) as a specific area of improvement. Previously in PE, pupils showed little initiative and responsibility, simply doing as they were told. The Year 2 class teacher used cards and photographs to help pupils plan gymnastics sequences, and video was introduced across the PE curriculum to promote peer and self-evaluation. Tasks were set that were more challenging, open-ended and

required pupils to select and apply skills, strategies and techniques. Any change in teaching methods brings challenges but positive results have been seen in improved PESS performance, task-focus and attitudes to PE. The approaches taken in PE have transferred to the rest of the curriculum.

People, Resources & Curriculum

John Cabot Academy³, Bristol, has focused on the ability of pupils to learn. Its aim is to develop pupils who can research and synthesise information, use their own initiative, solve problems, work in teams and who understand the values and processes of society. To help achieve this, the academy suspended the Year 7 national curriculum and developed a curriculum based on the RSA Opening Minds⁴ programme. All students start their first GCSE option at the end of year 8, which they sit at the end of Year 10. Making such curriculum changes isn't easy but benefits have been seen in improved attendance, behaviour, motivation and independent working.

Time

Timetabling isn't always seen as the most glamorous of topics but it is a powerful asset to deploy. In Darlington, Longfield School⁵ is moving away from the concept that each cohort moves through the school at the same pace. Pupils begin their studies early in June, they can

sit GCSEs early - or take three years to complete their course. Year 10 and Year 11 pupils can be found in the same class. Flexible timetabling combined with informed teaching and review means that pupils are assessed at 'age not stage'. The school has extended the time available for pupils by opening the school for longer periods. At the end of a typical day at Longfield School, it's usual to find over two hundred pupils continuing their learning in the study space provided. At home, access to personal online learning spaces via the school's learning platform provides further flexibility and opportunities for pupils to study at their own pace in their own time. This focus on the management of time has positive consequences for learning: the school is able to provide both a more personalised learning experience and help develop independent and self-directed learners.

Space

For its infant and young KS2 learners, Abbot's Green Community School⁶ has worked to create a learning environment that makes use of natural light, flexible learning rooms, calm music and adventurous outdoor space. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, spaces are designed to meet physical, emotional and learning needs and make school an exciting place to learn. The learning environment has been driven by the curriculum vision.

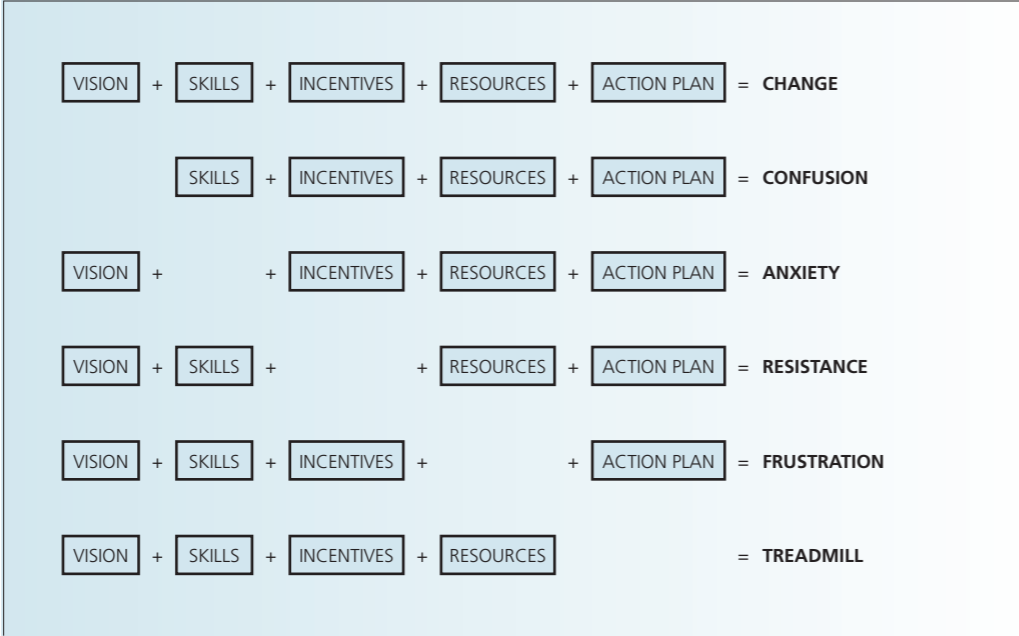


1: www.enquiringminds.org.uk
2: www.qca.org.uk/qca_1163.aspx
3: www.cabot.ac.uk
4: www.rsa.org.uk/newcurriculum
5: www.longfield.darlington.sch.uk
6: www.abbotsgreen.co.uk

Change Management and Manageable Change

The decades since 1980 have seen an extraordinary level of centrally directed change, so much so that the even word 'change' itself can generate a hollow response. What a tragedy. Learning is itself about change; about moving from one position to another. Bringing about the conditions for 21st century learning will require change, and that will require a vision for your learning community and its local context. The vision begins with these questions: 'What do we want to achieve?' and 'How will we organise learning?' Through the period of change it is also important to ask 'Is it working?' Innovation has to be disciplined.

Realistically, this vision alone will be no guarantee of success. To achieve success, the process of change needs to be both managed and manageable, based on realistic timescales and based on shared understanding and support from the members of the community. The following table shows what can happen when some essential elements are absent. It's not a complete explanation of the complexity of change management, but it is a helpful guide to implementation.



Adapted from Knoster, T. (1991) Presentation at TASH Conference, Washington DC (Adapted by Knoster from Enterprise Group Ltd.)

What happens next?

This short pamphlet is intended as a contribution towards the debate about 21st century learning communities. We look forward to hearing your views as the debate moves forward. The pamphlet also has an aim to provoke action and we would be very pleased to hear about your experiences on the journey to 21st century teaching and learning.

Please contact us:
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