

**GREATSCHOOLS** NETWORK



# What is the Great Schools Network?

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Roundtable on 2 October 2014

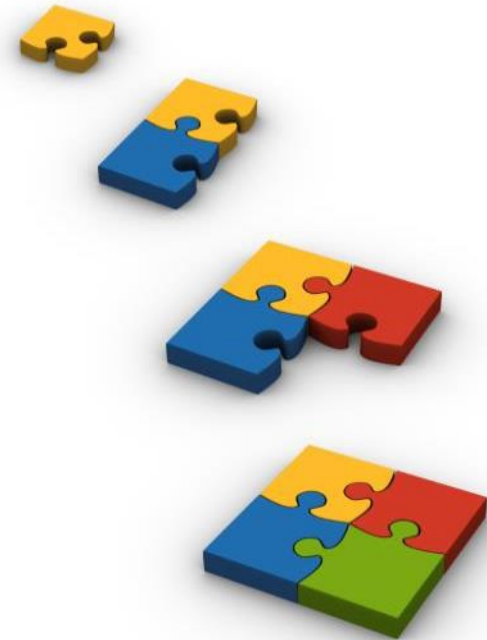
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## What is proposed

The purpose of the Great Schools Network (GSN), a group of interconnected people, schools and organisations, is to develop better ways to support schools to:

- Showcase and share with each other the great things that they already do and aspire to do
  - Co-create innovative school improvement practices, policies, plans, tools and technologies
- ... as a means to help optimise student learning, engagement and achievement





## Project background

- Strong interest in building a grass-roots schools network
- Celebratory and aspirational idea of 'great' schools and 'greater together'
- Funding and project team
- Consultation and planning
- Co-developing the GSN vision, values, purpose and strategies





## Why develop the GSN?

- The kind of key question that is often asked:

*“Are you aware of any really innovative, digitally-based work being currently developed with personalised learning plans for students? Any contact details would be gratefully received”*

- Support among schools, communities and stakeholders for a network to **share** ideas, knowledge, resources and great practices, facilitate **speedy access** to information about innovations and provide opportunities for schools to **co-create** innovative practices

In a system of schools linked in a **network**, it ought to be easy for one teacher to contact another as a source of good practice



### Education Epidemic

Transforming secondary schools through innovation networks

David H Hargreaves

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## Why this kind of network?

- Cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder
- School community stakeholders (teachers, parents, etc.) working together to optimise learning, engagement and achievement for all students
- An opportunity to help build stronger learning relationships among and between students, parents, families, teachers, principals and between schools, community organisations, businesses and local government



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## Why network?

- “Innovations and ideas for improvement already exist ... the challenge is to share them among schools ... supporting school networking has to be given a high priority in education reforms” (Sahlberg, 2012)
- “What distinguishes Finland is its emphasis on building networks of schools that stimulate and spread innovation as well as collaborate” (Schleicher, 2011)
- “The limits to a school’s ability to locate or generate the necessary capacity from within, and the advantages of sharing curriculum resources and expertise between schools” (Alexander, 2012)





## Why network?

- “A school that is collaboratively networked with other schools and with other agencies and organisations can achieve more than a school operating alone” (Cole, 2001)
- “Full personalisation will require the creation of powerful learning networks” (Rudd, Sutch and Facer, 2006)
- “Networks provide an opportunity for shared and dispersed leadership and responsibility, drawing on resources in the community beyond members of the education profession” (Chapman and Aspin, 2003)

### Schools and Communities

Working together to transform children's lives



John West-Burnham, Maggie Farrar  
and George Otero



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## How the GSN may work

- A social networking space and knowledge bank
- Project teams and clusters
- Forums featuring special guest presenters/great practice leaders
- e-Bulletins to share great practices
- Shared professional development and training
- Resource sharing



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## Feedback from schools

- “The Great Schools Network is a powerful concept” (educator)
- “It needs to be both aspirational and affirming” (principal)
- “This is precisely the kind of model of collaboration, resource sharing and community links that we want” (parent)
- “Not only networking by geographical proximity, but also broader networking around certain approaches, common interests, a common stage of development, etc.” (school business manager)
- “Perhaps a mentor network that made more use of benchmarks could also be embraced” (consultant)





## Feedback from schools

- “A Great Schools Network should highlight the diverse paths to ‘greatness’ ” (principal)
- “The idea of a Great Schools Network is excellent. ... In my role as president, having an opportunity to access tools, engage in dialogue with others and share ideas would be very helpful” (parent and school council president)
- “The intent and underpinning principles of the GSN are brilliant and much needed” (principal)
- “It has the potential to create an education commons” (educator)

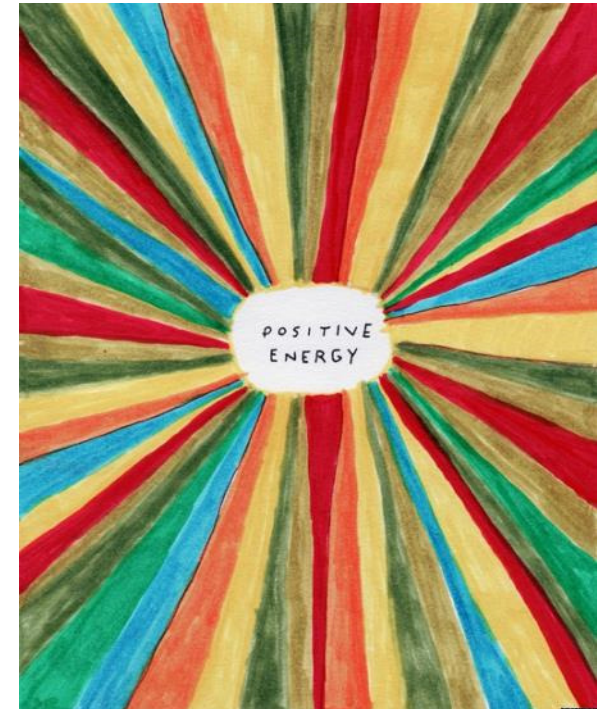




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## QUESTION

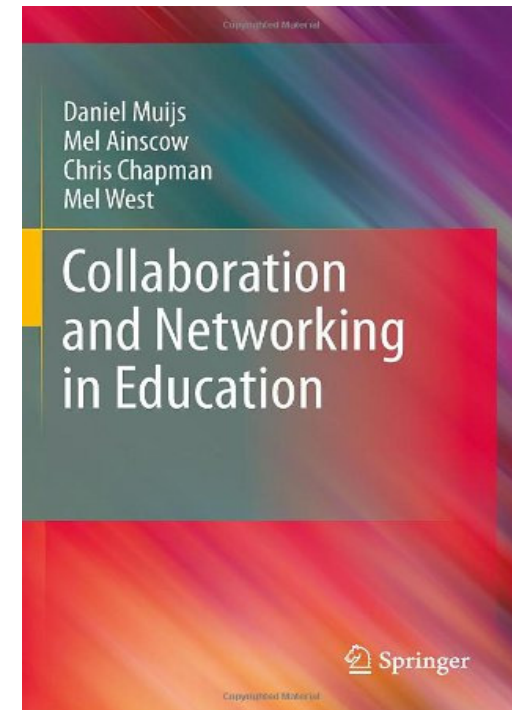
What are the potential benefits  
of a GSN?





## Key issues and challenges

- Why should schools join? What are the benefits? Criteria for membership of the GSN
- What is the problem/gap the GSN is proposing to solve/address?
- What is different about the GSN? How will the GSN work with/not duplicate existing networks?
- What is the relationship between the GSN and School Governance Network?
- How can activities of the network be quickly established as useful (or even essential)

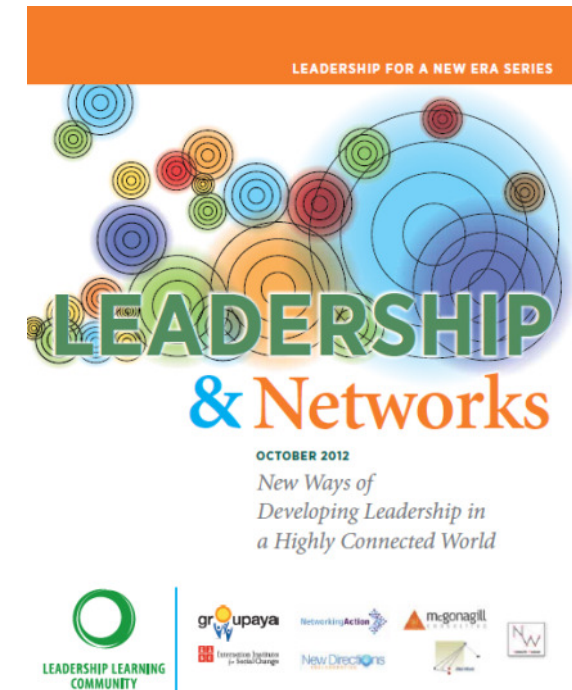




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## Key issues and challenges

- While forming the GSN, how will schools be able to identify others with 'like' interests?
- The right mix of face-to-face networking opportunities and a web-based platform
- Leadership, governance and accountability
- Intellectual property and copyright issues (especially when schools co-create practices)
- Project costs and securing sources of funds and in-kind support
- Finding time for the GSN and networking

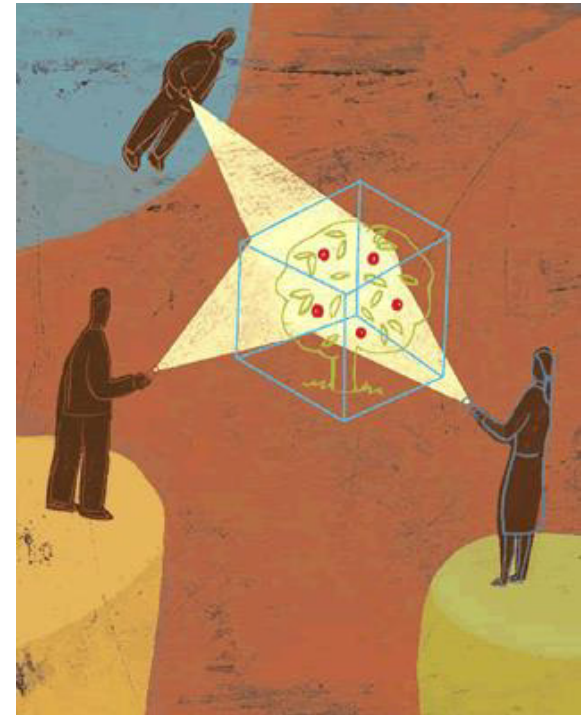




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## QUESTION

What are the key issues and challenges in building a GSN?



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# QUESTION

What are some practical strategies to enable a successful GSN?



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WE WISH TO THANK YOU



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