**Learning Matters – Leadership Matters**

**A professional learning framework to support teachers and leaders**

**By Jacqueline Morley, Senior Education Officer** (**Career-Long learning and Leadership) at the GTCS, published in Teaching Scotland (issue 68)**

I was struck by the great article in the last Teaching Scotland magazine by Sandra Bannerman, Headteacher Beaconhurt School, on professional learning “It’s never too late to learn” and the idea that the most significant impact on learners is talented and committed teachers. Central in her article is the critical role of schools leadership in enabling teachers to really focus on their professional learning as a priority. So, in an educational landscape of toolkits, guides, policies, pathways and much more, why propose a Professional Learning Framework? In essence, to enable teachers and leaders to focus on their learning and how this impacts on their work and the young learners they support.

Through engaging in professional learning, teachers shape their professional identity and the values and dispositions that guide their professional practice.

The quality of teaching and school leadership is directly linked to teacher professionalism and professional learning. The Scottish Government’s Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education 2016 clearly identifies that

*‘…the quality of teaching and school leadership are the most important in-school factors in a child’s outcomes which is why we will do everything we can to support our headteachers and teachers and to empower them.’ (Scottish Government, 2016:10)*

**How could a professional learning framework support teachers and leaders?**

The GTCS framework for professional learning helps describe the kind of learning that will best serve teachers in Scotland to enable them to meet the needs of every child and young person. It draws together a wide range of international literature and research on what really supports teacher professional learning and development. It identifies the key principles and maps out the features of effective professional learning in such a way to readily enable teachers and leaders to engage in activities, discussions and reflections on learning which can develop high levels of collaborative teacher professionalism.

Schools and learning communities which promote, support and lead professional learning which has significant and sustained impact on teachers, classroom practice and pupil learning have the following:

* **Leadership** - a central role of leadership is establishing a strategic vision for the ethos and culture for learning. Creating the context and conditions, the environment and structures to support and promote learning
* **Collaborative learning** - where teachers and staff are supported by collaborative working. Capacity building and critically informed professional dialogue where teachers learn with and from others
* **Partnerships for learning** – within and beyond the school/learning community
* **Impact on students** - a clear focus on the evidence of impact of professional learning on the successful outcomes for the young learners they support
* **Critically informed** - an enquiry mindset, using literature and research to inform and stretch our thinking
* **Deeply knowing –** understanding learners and learning

Central to the Professional Learning Framework are the GTCS Professional Standards. These Standards are clearly underpinned by the themes of values, sustainability and leadership. Professional values are at the core and are integral to, and demonstrated through, all our professional relationships and practices. The GTCS Standards support teachers and leaders as they develop as enquiring professionals, deepening their knowledge, skills and abilities, in order to enhance the learning experiences for all learners.

*‘Professional Standards have significant potential to provide the necessary provocation for teachers to think about their work, practice and professional identity in quite fundamentally, different and generative ways.’ (Sachs J 2003)*

At the heart of teacher professionalism and the GTCS Professional Standards are teachers as committed lifelong learners, teachers who:

* Know their own learning needs, understand and plan their development and learning
* Engage in relevant professional learning for their needs and professional context and are supported in doing this
* Are focusing on the impact for children and young people - asking in what ways might this professional learning impact on young people’s educational experience, either directly or indirectly?

**How could the Professional Learning Framework be used?**

The Professional Learning Framework can be used as:

* An individual
* A leader of professional learning in a school/learning community
* A strategic leader of professional learning at national, Local Authority and community level

The aim of the framework will be to enable us to discuss and share what excellent professional learning looks like, using the framework for example to:

* Audit and support current provision of professional learning
* Audit and support current engagement and focus of professional learning by individuals, schools/learning communities, local authorities and other providers of professional learning
* As a tool to guide the planning of professional learning provision, policies and/or practices
* A framework to inform the nature and purpose of professional learning and how this is structured, mediated and planned for
* An outline and aspiration for the development of all professional learning

The GTCS professional learning framework is a starting point for a professional dialogue. Through the co-creation with teachers and partners the Framework will be resourced by a series of support guides which unpack the research behind the key themes and are designed to provide insights and practical strategies to help leaders and teachers to reflect on and inform professional learning. These will support guides cover:

* What is the Professional Learning framework?
* The model and cycle of professional learning
* Leadership of and for learning
* Using the Professional Standards
* Collaborative Professionalism (Social Capital)
* Teacher as Learner: knowing and understanding (Human Capital)
* Professional Judgement and Critical Stance (Decisional Capital)

Over the next few years, the GTCS is developing a suite of Professional Learning Awards which seeks to place a spotlight on the excellent work taking place in our classrooms, schools, colleges, universities, local authorities, education organizations and across a range of partnerships. The Awards will help to celebrate, share and promote the ways in which the professionalism and professional learning of our teachers delivers the successful outcomes for all our learners.

The first award being developed is the Excellence in Professional Learning: an Award for Schools & Learning Communities. The award focuses on schools and learning communities which promote and develop a culture of deeply embedded professional learning in which all learners can succeed through ensuring a clear focus on the best outcomes for young people. A strategic development group of teachers and leaders from across Scotland are working collaboratively to deliver a framework to achieve this aim. Through this collaborative professionalism in action, the framework will be co-created by the teaching profession to ensure this is a meaningful tool to discuss, plan and shape professional learning. Why? Because learning really matters, as teachers we know and plan for that every day for our young learners. The GTCS Professional Learning Framework sees the teacher as the lead learner in their professional context, where their professional learning is planned and supported to develop deeper knowledge, skills and abilities, or in the words of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) how we ‘deliberately learn’:

*‘Even with the best intentions, even if you seem like a ‘natural’ as a teacher, unless you deliberately learn how to get better so you can teach the students of today for the world of tomorrow, you will not be teaching like a pro. You will be just an enthusiastic amateur.’* Professional Capital: transforming teaching in every school, Hargreaves & Fullan (2012)

**Further reading:**

Innovative Learning Environments & Schooling Redesigned (OECD 2013) <http://www.oecd.org/edu/schooling-redesigned-9789264245914-en.htm>

Teacher Professional Learning and development (Timperley 2008) <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Educational_Practices/EdPractices_18.pdf>

**Teacher Professional Standards: Controlling or developing teaching, *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, Sachs, J., vol.9, no. 2, May 2003, 175-186.**

Professional Capital (Hargreaves & Fullan 2012) (see previous article from Zoe for full version)

Visible Learning for teacher: maximizing impact on learning (Hattie 2012)