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What are we **learning about...?**

Establishing a network of schools

The levels of learning activity

A development tool designed to explore the
processes of establishing a network of schools.

Networked Learning Communities

learning from each other

learning with each other

learning on behalf of each other

Acknowledgements

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The levels of learning activity

This development tool has been used successfully within networked learning communities to help focus on learning and learning processes at a variety of levels within schools and across networks of schools. It has been designed to help network participants in providing a starting point for framing their network activity and planning for future development. The activity provides a baseline data set from which to gauge network development over time. A more detailed explanation of this activity with examples of how it can be used in a network are available on the CD-rom *What is a Networked Learning Community?* (NCSL, 2004)¹.

What are the levels of learning?

In the Networked Learning Communities programme the six levels of learning are used to frame activity within a network. The six levels are:

- pupil learning
- adult learning
- leadership learning
- school-wide learning
- school-to-school learning
- network-to-network learning

These levels of learning provide the network with a 'warp and weft' structure through which they can weave their own design of activity.

What is the levels of learning activity?

The questions which form the focus of the activity are clustered under each of the six levels of learning. The activity focuses on learning and learning processes and includes the learning of network participants at all levels including pupils, adults and school leaders. In the light of this, the activity invites participation from all staff in a network of schools.

The levels of learning activity provides a framework which enables networks to build a picture of where they are now and where they are hoping to go in the future. In this way, the activity can be used in the processes of baselining and progress mapping within networks.

How are networks using the levels of learning activity?

Networks have used the levels of learning activity process and outcomes in the following ways:

- to weave coherence and reflect systematically on priorities to develop
- to drive discussion forward by zooming in on points of difference
- to discuss areas of focus that otherwise might not be raised □

¹ To obtain a copy of the CD-rom *What is a Networked Learning Community?* please email nlc@ncsl.org.uk

Guidance: how to use the levels of learning activity

1

Introducing concepts

- Introduce the purpose of the activity:
 - generating discussion and data about teaching and learning in every school in your network
 - collecting evidence of progress across the whole network
- Introduce the concept of the levels of learning.

6

Data analysis

- The analysis of the results of the activity will provide school and network data.
- You will be able to compare the results of schools in your network and track progress over time.
- Think about how you will create time to share your results with those who took part in the survey.
- How can you use the results to inform your planning and review processes as a school and a network?

5

Discussion and data processing

- As a whole group discuss:
 - which answers surprised you?
 - where did you disagree?
 - which level of learning did you rate highly?
 - which level of learning did you rate the lowest?
- Don't forget to collect the activity responses so that the data can be collated and analysed.

2

Reflection time

- Each individual should read and reflect on each of the questions privately.
- Think about what evidence you have for your answers.

3

Discussion and dialogue

- In pairs, discuss individual answers and explore the reasons behind those answers.
- Debate differences of opinion and discuss different types of evidence to support answers.
- Agree a joint answer (you both need to be from the same school in order to do this).

4

Data collection

- In your pairs, complete the survey with your joint answers. Tick the box that most represents your attitudes.
- Don't forget to record what school and network you are from and who filled in the questionnaire (ie teachers, support staff etc).

Logistics

Identify a time and a venue for all the staff in every school to complete the activity eg:

- staff meeting
- training day
- network conference
- departmental meeting
- leadership team meeting

The levels of learning activity

Photocopy this page and tick the box that most reflects your attitudes for each section.

1 Pupil learning

	regularly	often	sometimes	rarely
(a) We foster an environment in our school in which pupils enable each other to learn, for example, through peer assessment or peer mentoring.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) The learning in our classrooms is informed by published research and expertise about how children learn.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Pupil feedback helps our teachers review their classroom practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Our pupils work with teachers to generate ideas about improving lessons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 Adult learning

	regularly	often	sometimes	never
(a) Our school uses published research and expertise to improve teachers' classroom practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) In our school, schemes of work are collaboratively planned.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) In our school, staff collect evidence in order to improve their teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) In our school, staff discuss different teaching practices in groups and then try them out in their classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 Leadership learning

	regularly	often	sometimes	never
(a) Our school provides leadership opportunities for all staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) In our school, we discuss and reflect on our experiences of leadership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Colleagues in our school read published research about school leadership.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Our headteacher learns collaboratively from other headteachers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4 School-wide learning

	regularly	often	sometimes	rarely
(a) Individual staff in our school help others to improve their classroom practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) In our school, teachers share classroom practices with colleagues who are responsible for different curriculum subjects.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Staff in our school feel strongly that they add value to one another's professional development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Groups of teachers in our school share what they have learned with the whole staff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5 School-to-school learning

	regularly	often	sometimes	rarely
(a) Staff in our school have visited other schools in our network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Staff from our school have identified excellent practice in other schools in our network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Staff in our school teach differently as a result of working with other schools in our network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Changes in our own school have benefited other schools in our network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6 Network-to-network learning

	regularly	often	sometimes	rarely
(a) Staff in our school look to other networks for innovative ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Staff in our school have visited schools in other networks in order to learn from them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Staff in our school have shared teaching resources with schools in other networks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Events provide an opportunity for learning between different networks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7 Making a difference

	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
(a) Pupil achievement in our school has improved as a result of our network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Classroom practice in our school has improved because we belong to our network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) The quality of leadership in our school has improved as a result of our network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Our school as a whole has progressed because we belong to our network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

From the whole activity, choose a question that you discussed fully. ☐

What examples and evidence informed your choice of answer to that question?

This activity was designed to be completed in pairs. How many teachers completed this activity? ☐
How many support staff completed this activity? ☐
How many other staff completed this activity? ☐

What is the name of your school?

What is the name of your network?

To help you get started, here are a couple of examples of how networks of schools have used the levels of learning activity. You may want to use these methods, or you may want to take some of the ideas and modify them to suit your own group.

- One school decided to set up a special extended INSET session after school, in order to provide quality discussion time for considering the levels of learning activity.
 - After asking staff initially to consider their answers to the questions individually, people were then organised into mixed groups of middle managers, teachers and learning support assistants.
 - As groups discussed and compared their various answers, some lively debate ensued on aspects of teaching and learning and professional development.
 - As a plenary, the groups were then asked to place their marks on a poster size version of the questions on the wall and justify how they rated each level of learning.
 - The school is now planning to restructure its school development plan around the levels of learning next year.
- One of the networked learning communities seized on the opportunity to use the levels of learning activity as a tool to engage all staff in every school in discussion on teaching and learning.
 - The headteachers organised a launch for their networked learning community, making use of a common INSET day.
 - Staff were encouraged to reflect on their own school's strengths and weaknesses and mark answers on the levels of learning activity, before being divided into cross-school groups to discuss the relative strengths of each other's schools.
 - The buzz in the conference room was fantastic. The activity proved to be an excellent way of involving all staff in the heart of the network.
 - Many cross-school links followed as teachers shared ideas about best practice in their schools. □

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What are we learning about...?

The 'What are we learning about...?' series is designed to make public the learning that has emerged from NLCs in the last two years.

The first six titles in the series will focus on:

What are we learning about...?

- LEA involvement in school networks
- **Establishing a network of schools**
- The impact of school networks
- Professional development within school networks
- Leadership within school networks
- Sustaining a network of schools

To order a copy of this publication and others in this series, please email **nlc@ncsl.org.uk** quoting the reference **WAWLA/Establishing a network of schools**

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