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# Levels of learning activity: a collaborative enquiry exercise for discussion and reflection

*‘If every adult in every network has engaged with the levels of learning activity both individually, and collaboratively, they will have engaged with the values and principles of the Networked Learning Communities programme in a meaningful way.’*

David Jackson,  
Co-leader Networked Learning Communities

## Levels of learning activity

To help you get started, here are a couple of examples of how NLCs used the levels of learning activity last year. 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 NLC. Many cross-school links followed as teachers shared ideas about best practice in their schools.*



## How to use this tool:

The purpose of the activity is to generate discussion and data about teaching and learning in every school in your learning network. The activity is also helpful for baselining and progress mapping your network's development.

The activity is based around six levels of learning:

- Pupil learning – around a shared pedagogic focus.
- Adult learning – in professional learning communities.
- Leadership learning – at all levels and including collaborative headteacher learning.
- School-wide learning – involving progressive school re-design around learning principles.
- School-to-school learning – between schools as communities of practice.
- Network-to-network learning – modelling the development of a learning system.

We hope that participating in the activity will create conversation and debate about teaching, learning leadership and networking in your school and network. This is why the activity is designed to be completed in pairs followed by group discussion.

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# Guidance: how to use the levels of learning

## Introducing concepts

Introduce the purpose of the activity:

- generating discussion and data about teaching and learning in every school in your NLC
- collecting evidence of progress across the whole Networked Learning Communities programme

Also, introduce the concept of the levels of learning – a key part of the programme.

1

## Data analysis

You will receive the data and results of your activity from NCSL within two months.

You will be able to compare the results from your schools with the results from all the other schools in the programme.

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 an NLC?

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## 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 in the activities and return them for processing.

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Identify a time for all the staff to complete

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## Reflection time

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

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## 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).

3

## 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 NLC you are from and who filled in the questionnaire (ie teachers, support staff etc).

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# Levels of learning activity

## 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

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (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

- |  |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (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

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (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"/> |

Please tick the box that most reflects your attitudes

# Levels of learning activity

Please tick the box that most reflects your attitudes

5. School-to-school learning

- |  | Regularly                | Often                    | Sometimes                | Rarely                   |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) Staff in our school have visited other schools in our NLC                                  | <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 NLC       | <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 NLC | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) Changes in our own school have benefited other schools in our NLC                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6 Network-to-network learning

- |  |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) Staff in our school look to other NLCs 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 NLCs 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 NLCs      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (d) NCSL events provide an opportunity for learning between different NLCs             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

7. Making a difference

- |   |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| (a) Pupil achievement in our school has improved as a result of our NLC         | <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 NLC  | <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 NLC | <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 NLC           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

From the whole levels of learning activity, choose a question that you discussed fully.

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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 networked learning community?

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Networked Learning Communities

learning from each other   learning with each other   learning on behalf of each other