

Activity 1: The System Review - Where Are We Now?

Whole group or small groups if large, 20 minutes + 10 minutes discussion



If your group has fewer than ten people, work through this together as a whole. If you are a larger group, split into twos or threes and then come back together to share.

Read through the five signs of system strain from the paper - poor outcomes, lack of capacity and conflict, inequitable access, teacher workload, and rising costs - and discuss the following questions together:

- Where do you recognise these pressures? Think about your classroom(s), your school, your trust, and what you know of the wider system. What does this look like in practice?
- Which of these feel most acute right now - in your experience, are they connected to each other?
- Thinking about the role of school and trust leaders: where can we have the most impact, what would it take to make meaningful improvements for pupils and teachers?

This conversation is meant to be candid. The paper argues that many of these pressures are systemic, not the result of individual failure - try to hold that frame as you talk. The goal is not to apportion blame but to build an honest shared picture of where you are starting from, before moving to what might change.

Activity 2: The Intervention Audit - Delivery and Impact

Whole staff or phase teams, 30 minutes



Before the session, compile a list of every structured intervention currently running across your school — withdrawal groups, one-to-one programmes, targeted literacy or numeracy sessions, TA-led support, external agency input, and any other provision sitting outside core classroom teaching. Include the name, who delivers it, which pupils receive it, and how long it has been running.

In the session, working in pairs or small groups, work through the list using these four questions as your frame:

- **Evidence:** What is the evidence base for this intervention? Does it appear in EEF guidance or peer-reviewed research? Does the evidence come from contexts similar to yours?
- **Impact:** How are you measuring whether it is working? Do you have data that connects the intervention to improved outcomes over time — and is that picture clear enough to act on?
- **Equity:** Which pupils access this, and how are they selected? Are there pupils who would benefit but are not currently included?
- **Cost and proportion:** What does this intervention require in time and staffing? Is that investment proportionate to the outcomes you are seeing? Could the same resource strengthen something upstream that would benefit a wider group of pupils?

In the debrief, identify where your provision is well-evidenced and well-targeted and where there may be value in looking more closely. Agree one concrete next step.

Activity 3: A Day in the Life - Following the Vulnerable Learner

Structured observation + facilitated debrief, half day



Before the session, identify three to five pupils who are among the most vulnerable in your school. Think broadly, this might include pupils with EHCPs, those on SEN support, those with persistently high absence, or those who have been excluded or are at risk of exclusion. If needed, brief staff in advance that this is not a lesson observation exercise; no teacher is being evaluated. The purpose is to understand the school day through the lens of the pupils' experience.

On the day, staff go out in cross-department pairs. Each pair follows one identified pupil through as much of their normal school day as is practical. As you observe, use this simple frame for each lesson or transition:

- Was this pupil present - physically and mentally in the room?
- Was this pupil participating - able to access and engage with what was happening?
- Was this pupil succeeding – able to demonstrate success on relevant tasks and assessments?
- What barriers did you notice? Did anything help address these?

Keep notes, but keep them descriptive rather than evaluative. You are watching, not judging.

In the debrief, come back together as a group and share what you noticed. Work through these questions:

- What patterns appeared across different lessons or settings?
- Where did the pupil(s) thrive, and what conditions made that possible?
- Where did they struggle, and what was the barrier - was it the instruction, the environment, the task design, the relationships?
- How does what you observed connect to principles 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 in the paper?
- What implications does what you saw have for pupils' experience and for teachers' development?

Activity 4: Redesigning for Access - The Lesson Makeover

Subject or phase teams, 30 minutes



Each team member should bring a real lesson plan and/or supporting resources used recently - something familiar, not something prepared specially for today.

Using the paper's three-tier framework as your audit tool, work through the lesson together:

First, assess it against the perceivable, understandable, doable criteria from principle 3.3. Ask honestly: could every pupil in your class see, hear and process this material as presented? Did every pupil understand what they were being asked to do and why? Was the task genuinely within reach?

Then, choose one element to redesign. Your constraint is this: whatever you change must benefit all pupils, not just those with identified needs. You are not adding a differentiated worksheet - you are improving the design for everyone.

Share your redesigns across teams and discuss:

- What did this require you to think about differently?
- What would need to change about how you plan, not just what you produce, for this to become habitual?
- Where does time or workload get in the way, and what would need to shift to remove that barrier?

Activity 5: What Does the Evidence Say? - Principle Into Practice

Whole staff or phase groups, 25 minutes

This activity asks you to move from the paper's principles to your own professional knowledge and experience. Choose two of the five principles that feel either most relevant to your context or most challenging to implement. For each one, your group discusses:

- What does this look like when it's working effectively? Can anyone give a concrete example from their own practice or somewhere they've seen it done well?
- What gets in the way of this in our school - is it knowledge, time, culture, systems, or something else?
- What is one thing we could do differently next week that would move us closer to this principle? Be specific: name the lesson, the year group, the action.

Close the activity by asking each person to write down one commitment - a single, concrete change they will make to their practice before your next meeting. Pairs share their commitment with each other so there is a person to check in with. At your next meeting, spend ten minutes asking: did you do it, what happened, and what did you learn?