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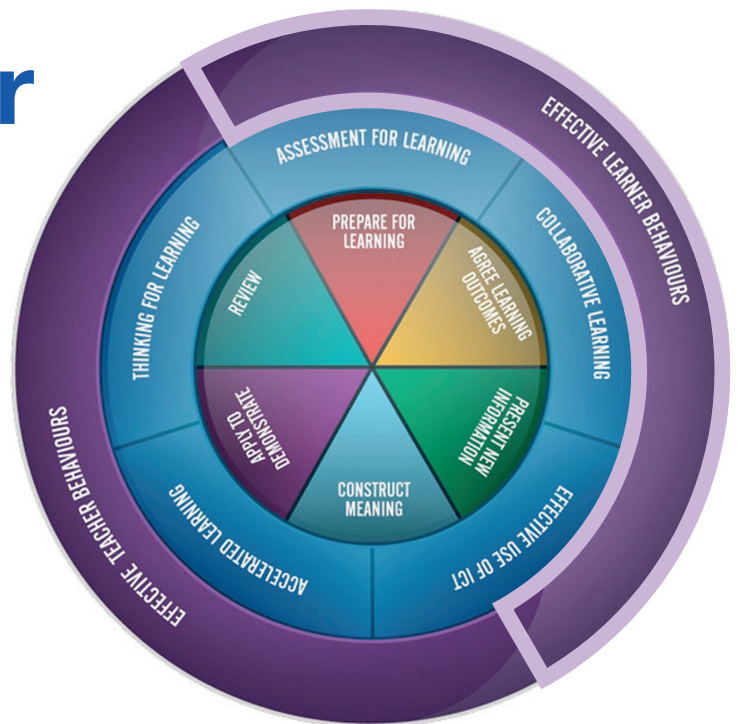enhancement
programme®

Effective learner behaviours

'Learning... that reflective activity which enables the learner to draw upon previous experience to understand and evaluate the present, so as to shape future action and formulate new knowledge.'

J.Abbott
Learning makes sense: re-creating education for a changing future – Letchworth Education 2000 (1994)

Effective learners have gained understanding of the individual and social processes necessary to become effective learners. This is not just the acquisition of particular strategies, but the monitoring and reviewing of learning to see whether strategies are effective. This can be described as 'learning how to learn' and metacognition.

Effective learning includes this extra crucial ingredient, which actively involves the student in metacognitive processes of planning, monitoring and reflecting.

What are the outcomes of learning?

- Knowledge – of things, ideas, people, action.
- Skills – with things, people, ideas and action.
- Feelings and emotions: success, satisfaction
- Ideas and strategies about learning.
- Motivation to learn more.
- A sense of oneself, including self as learner.
- A sense of others and interacting with them.
- A sense of membership of a community.

'If teaching were as simple as telling, we'd all be a lot smarter than we are.'

Mark Twain

The features of this definition include:

- Learning is an active process. The learner relates new experiences to existing meaning and in the process may accommodate and assimilate new ideas.
- Past, present and future are connected. Some un-learning and re-learning may be needed.
- How the learning is influenced by the use to which learning is to be put: how does the learning inform action in future situations?

Desired outcomes of education

To plan activities which promote the process of learning is a complex challenge.

Claxton and Lucas (2013) refer to the prosocial and epistemic desired outcomes of education, teachers and students develop valued learning dispositions. Prosocial cultivates the attitudes of a good friend, neighbour or citizen. Epistemic links to the qualities of mind of the powerful learner.

Commonly desired outcomes of education	
Prosocial	**Epistemic**
Kind (not callous)	Inquisitive (not passive)
Generous (not greedy)	Resilient (not easily defeated)
Forgiving (not vindictive)	Imaginitive (not literal)
Tolerant (not bigoted)	Craftsmanlike (not slapdash)
Trustworthy (not deceitful)	Sceptical (not credulous)
Morally brave (not apathetic)	Collaborative (not selfish)
Convivial (not egotistical)	Thoughtful (not impulsive)
Ecological (not rapacious)	Practical (not only 'academic')

Teaching-learning processes

To plan activities which promote the process of learning is a complex challenge.

Bruner describes 4 models of pedagogy:

- Learning by being shown.
- Learning by being told.
- Learning by constructing meaning.
- Learning by joining a knowledge- generating community.

The ways in which we talk about teaching and learning processes may reflect different conceptions of learning:

She taught me... (instruction)
I made sense of... (construction)
We worked out that... (co-construction)

Effective learning in the classroom is promoted by:

- activity, with reflection and sense-making
- collaboration for learning
- learner responsibility for learning
- learning about learning.

Promoting active learning

Active engagement with materials, people and ideas are needed, together with active reflection, enquiry and sense-making. It is not sufficient to be engaged in activity, there needs to be cognitive conflict. Without reflection on what happens when we try new things, the learning potential is lost. Research has shown that pupils rate research, discussion, group work and practical work as twice as effective at promoting their learning as copying, answering questions from a book and dictation.

Promoting collaborative learning

When learners create a joint product and understanding together, they develop higher order skills. Learners develop interpersonal skills, improved communication skills, management skills, and positive multiethnic relationships. The teacher's role becomes more concerned with higher-level enquiry and less with mundane tasks.

Promoting growth mindsets

When students have a growth mindset, they perform far better than those with a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2010). Students with a growth mindset believe they are able to develop their abilities, have the desire to learn and find challenging activities exciting. If students believe that intelligence can grow through effort they are more likely to welcome the challenge of learning something new.

To promote growth mindsets in your classroom, you can:

- praise the process of learning (e.g. 'you tried hard!') rather than intelligence or ability (e.g. 'you're so clever!')
- encourage students to use learning logs, diaries and journals to make goals for their learning and the learning process explicit
- teach students about historical figures who were not regarded as fast learners in childhood
- provide meaningful learning tasks which challenge all students, portraying challenges as fun and exciting
- teach students about the brain and mindsets directly.

Those with a growth mindset are not easily defeated. They see the making of mistakes as an indicator of effective learning.

Promoting responsibility in learning

When learners take more responsibility for their learning, it can:

- improve their academic performance
- increase their motivation and confidence
- help them be more aware of the skills they need to develop
- foster social inclusion (Meyer et al, 2008).

You can encourage independent learning in your classroom by incorporating:

- collaborative tasks
- peer teaching and mentoring
- learner consultation
- discussion rich activities
- activities that learners plan and carry out for themselves
- enquiry
- self and peer assessment (CUREE, 2009; CUREE, 2008).

Nurturing and developing Habits of Mind

The 16 Habits of Mind, developed by Prof Art Costa and Dr Bena Kallick are the characteristics found in independent, self-directing learners. They offer a framework for learners of all ages to decide how they can behave intelligently when facing many choices, when stuck, when planning a complex task, when working collaboratively or when needing to tackle a new challenge. They provide a framework or compass for students to refer to when needing to direct the next steps in their learning.

They remove dependency on the teacher and overtime become internalised, habituated approaches to taking the lead in one's own learning even when the way forward is not clear or is in unfamiliar territory.

"Habits of Mind are the characteristics of what intelligent people do when they are confronted with problems, the resolutions of which are not immediately apparent."

Prof Art Costa

Habits of Mind:

Persisting

Managing impulsivity

Listening with understanding and empathy

Thinking flexibly

Thinking about thinking (Metacognition)

Striving for accuracy and precision

Questioning and posing problems

Applying past knowledge to new situations

Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision

Gathering data through all senses

Creating, imagining, and innovating

Responding with wonderment and awe

Taking responsible risks

Finding humour

Thinking interdependently

Remaining open to continuous learning

Promoting learning about learning

Learners who build up the language and piece together knowledge about their learning experiences become more reflective, strategic and versatile, and show improvements in academic performance.

Classroom practices which promote learning about learning include:

- making learning a focus of attention
- making learning a focus of conversation
- making learning a focus of reflection
- making learning a focus of learning.

Aspects of learning about learning include:

- reviewing how we learn most effectively
- exploring our thinking and problem-solving
- reviewing our beliefs about successes
- exploring approaches to anxiety-provoking tasks
- managing feelings that impede learning
- practising our approach to difficult tasks, talking ourselves through them
- examining our responses to experiences of failure
- analysing contributions to group tasks.

Schools that promote effective learning

They emphasise intrinsic motivation, social relationships for learning, and an overall learning culture. They display a sense of purpose (i.e. learning). Teachers see their peers as a resource, and continue to learn. New teaching ideas come from their colleagues and their own creative

solutions. The greater the teachers' opportunities for learning, the more their students tend to learn.

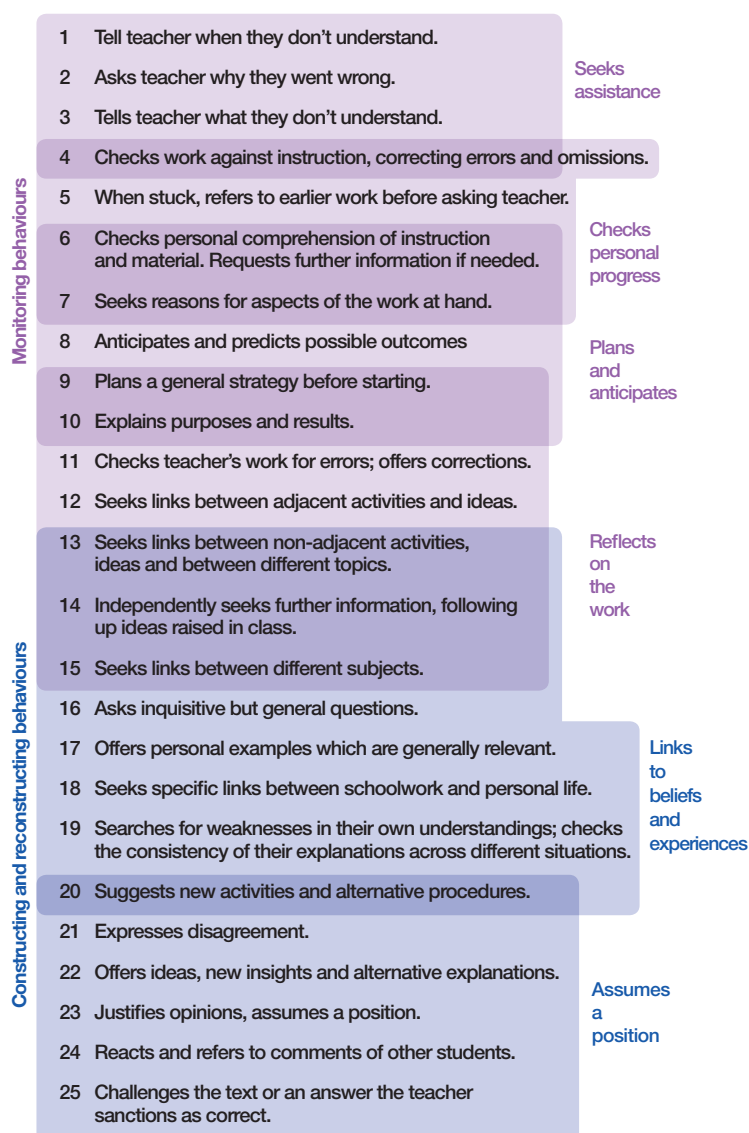**In such a setting leaders of learning are likely to:**

- make learning a visible element
- talk publicly about learning
- promote inquiry into learning
- support learning exchanges and forums
- reward and support staff learning
- ask of every action, 'what do we learn from this?'
- encourage others to do the same.

Qualities/attitudes of effective learners

The Project for Enhancing Effective Learning (PEEL) is a teacher-led programme founded in 1985 by an autonomous and voluntary group of teachers and academics who shared concerns about the prevalence of passive, unreflective, dependant student learning, even in apparently successful lessons. Through a thriving and ongoing process of collaborative action research over the past 27 years in Victoria, Australia, the programme has identified a list of effective learner behaviours, (reproduced below), together with many procedures that, when used regularly in the classroom, can promote the development of effective learning.

PEEL list – good learning behaviours

(Baird & Northfield, 1992)

Behaviour category	#	Behaviour	Grouping
Monitoring behaviours	1	Tell teacher when they don't understand.	Seeks assistance
	2	Asks teacher why they went wrong.	
	3	Tells teacher what they don't understand.	
	4	Checks work against instruction, correcting errors and omissions.	
	5	When stuck, refers to earlier work before asking teacher.	Checks personal progress
	6	Checks personal comprehension of instruction and material. Requests further information if needed.	
	7	Seeks reasons for aspects of the work at hand.	
	8	Anticipates and predicts possible outcomes	Plans and anticipates
	9	Plans a general strategy before starting.	
	10	Explains purposes and results.	
Constructing and reconstructing behaviours	11	Checks teacher's work for errors; offers corrections.	Reflects on the work
	12	Seeks links between adjacent activities and ideas.	
	13	Seeks links between non-adjacent activities, ideas and between different topics.	
	14	Independently seeks further information, following up ideas raised in class.	
	15	Seeks links between different subjects.	
	16	Asks inquisitive but general questions.	Links to beliefs and experiences
	17	Offers personal examples which are generally relevant.	
	18	Seeks specific links between schoolwork and personal life.	
	19	Searches for weaknesses in their own understandings; checks the consistency of their explanations across different situations.	
	20	Suggests new activities and alternative procedures.	
	21	Expresses disagreement.	Assumes a position
	22	Offers ideas, new insights and alternative explanations.	
	23	Justifies opinions, assumes a position.	
	24	Reacts and refers to comments of other students.	
	25	Challenges the text or an answer the teacher sanctions as correct.	

So what do teachers have to do to support and develop effective learners?

- Provide opportunities to practise the attribute or skill.
- Plan opportunities to develop the attribute or skill (build in challenge); cultivating dispositions as well as developing knowledge.
- Explicitly model the effective learner behaviours.
- Plan for debriefing the process of learning – the how, not the what.
- Plan a rich variety of learning experiences.
- Plan for opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Encourage reflection on perceived failure and extract the lessons learned – 'What would we do differently if...'
- Plan for opportunities for real choice and independent decision-making. Students respond positively to the freedom to make some decisions about what or how they will work. These may include choices about which area of content to explore, the level of demand (do more routine tasks or fewer more demanding ones), the form of presentation.
- Provide a diverse range of ways of experiencing success. Raising intellectual self-esteem is an important aspect of working with low attaining pupils, and success via interactive discussion, question-asking, role-plays and creative tasks often result in greater confidence, and hence persistence in tackling other tasks. Publicly recognising and praising good learning behaviours is useful here.
- Promote talk which is exploratory, tentative and hypothetical. This sort of talk fosters link-making, and reflects high levels of intellectual engagement.
- Encourage students to learn from other student's questions and comments. The conception that they can learn from other student's ideas, comments or questions develops more slowly than the concept that discussion is real and useful work.
- Build a classroom environment that supports risk-taking. Students often feel safer waiting for the teacher's answer to appear than to suggest an answer that might be wrong. Training students to disagree without put-downs is essential to developing good learning behaviours.
- Use a variety of intellectually challenging teaching procedures. Teaching procedures that counter passive learning and promote quality learning require student effort and energy, hence they need to be varied to retain freshness. Secondly, variety is another source of student interest.

- Regularly raise students' awareness of the nature of different aspects of effective learning. Develop a shared language with students to talk about effective learning behaviours; create posters and charts that can be referred to in discussion.
- Discuss with pupils the skills and attributes of good learners. Set goals with pupils and classes based on the skills and attitudes they need to develop.
- Develop students' understanding of the 'big picture'. Discuss with students how various activities fit together and link to the big ideas. Students often do not link activities or see the relevance to what they perceive as the real world.

We believe that the TEEP framework gives teachers and students the opportunity to develop effective teacher and learner behaviours. However, the teacher needs to be as concerned with the process of learning and the development of skills and attributes, as well as with knowledge of the subject.

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