

Building the habits of...

Confident Individuals



Curriculum for Excellence: the educational balancing trick

Scottish schools are more fortunate than many others in having, in CfE, a curriculum that pays balanced attention both to the higher purposes of educating young people for their future lives, and to the more obvious classroom business of curriculum areas with knowledge and specific skills to be inculcated and acquired.

But keeping the balance is always challenging. The ever-present pressure of the day-to-day, plus eventual qualifications, can squeeze out attention to the longer-term, higher-order learning and dispositions.

Yet the two sides can work synergistically instead of competitively, in concert rather than in conflict

...

CfE says that **Confident Individual** are:

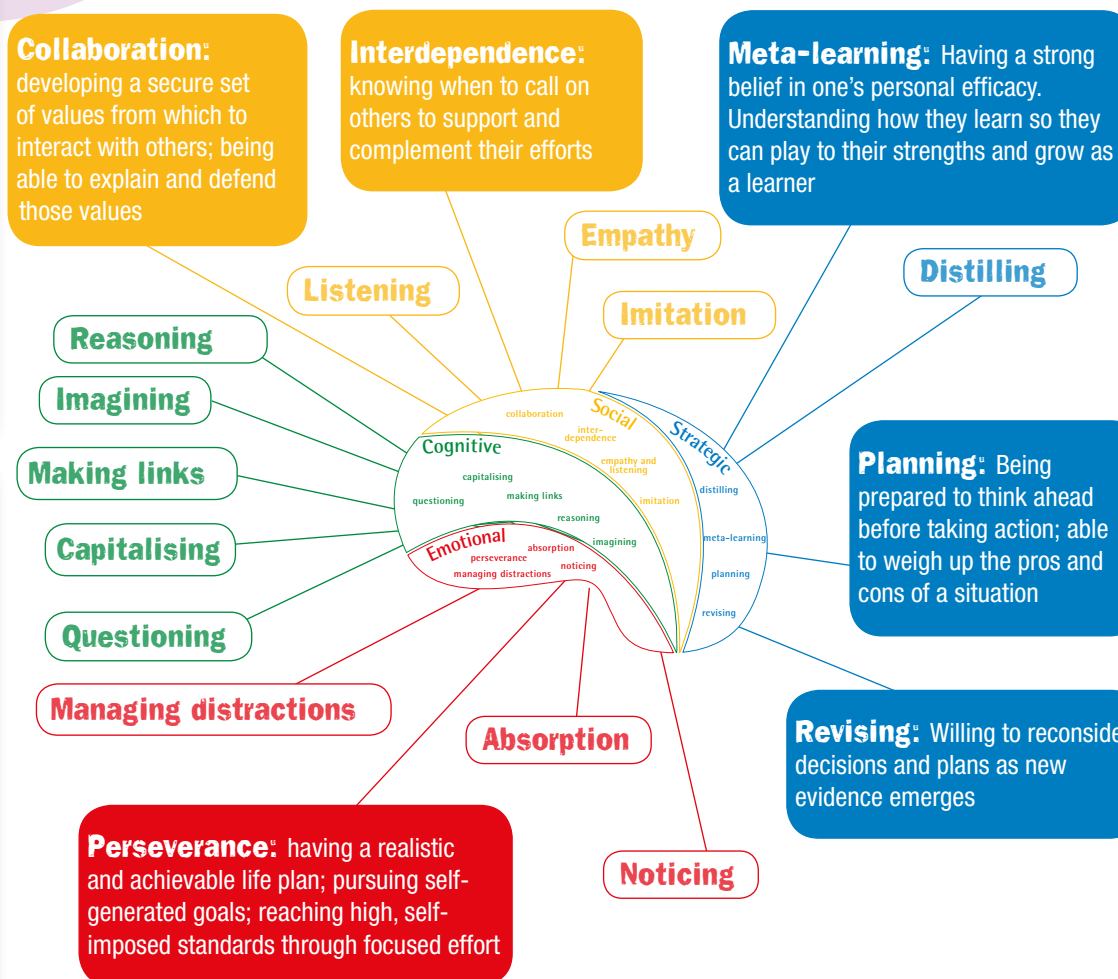
- self respect
- a sense of physical, mental and emotional well being
- secure values and beliefs

and that they can:

- relate to others and manage themselves
- pursue a healthy and active lifestyle
- be self aware
- develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world
- live as independently as they can
- assess risk and take informed decisions
- achieve success in different areas of activity



Uniting the models of CfE and Building Learning Power All powerful learners cultivate a set of key learning characteristics. Confident Individuals, as described by the CfE, would deploy a subset of these characteristics, the most important of which are highlighted in the diagram below.



The architecture of

Classroom cultures

Relating – How you relate to your students; gradually sharing more of the responsibility for learning with them

- **Students as leaders of their own learning**
 - » Don't tell students exactly what they have to do - allow them to make decisions for themselves; know where the scaffolding stops
- **Working to deadlines**
 - » Use time constraints constructively to drive activities to efficient conclusions
- **Engaging resources**
 - » Encourage students to range critically across many sources of information and support

A shift in relationships

Talking – How you talk about learning; the sort of language content and style you use to enhance and explain learning

- **Make it safe to disagree**
 - » Help students to say why they disagree with you and others and why
- **Regular self-review**
 - » Build in moments for students to evaluate what they know, understand and can do, and where they need to go next as learners
- **Time to think and talk things through**
 - » Allow thinking time to explore options individually, and collaboratively, using thinking tools.

A shift in learning language

Constructing – How you construct learning activities; the tasks and classroom routines you use to build positive learning habits

- **Establish planned routines**
 - » Establish ways of operating when faced with a task or challenge that provide reliable starting points for exploration or experimentation
- **Revise opinions in the light of experience**
 - » Encourage the habit of routinely thinking again as a course of action unfolds
- **Open-ended challenges**
 - » Encourage students to find out for themselves and explore possibilities as they embrace uncertainty

A shift in how learning is constructed



Celebrating – What you celebrate about learning; what you prize, recognise, display; the outward signs of beliefs about learning

- **Public performances**
 - » Offer regular opportunities for students to present their work publicly and take pride in what they have achieved
- **Value others' contributions**
 - » Draw attention to the input made by students in framing ideas and suggesting directions

A shift in what is celebrated and valued

Making the shift

Students will first need to embrace the language of learning and be offered opportunities that enable them to become conscious of using their learning behaviours. Teachers need first to gradually shift the culture of the classroom and devolve more responsibility for learning to students. Later they take a more forensic approach to designing classroom activities using the learning behaviours to deepen engagement and understanding.

For many teachers this shift is likely to call for changes in practice. Take it steady! Think about what you might...

Stop

Trying to control everything

Start

Modelling your own learning

Start slowly

Reducing the scaffolding around learning.

Experiment with

Asking students to reflect on your teaching

Classroom activities and talk to nurture Confident Individuals



Starters – to engage learners. For example:

Going for Three

Begin each lesson with 'Tell me Three ... things we learned last lesson; ways we learned last lesson; things we still need to find out', etc.

End each lesson with 'Tell me Three ... things we learned today; learning skills we used today; ways you could become a more effective learner' etc.

Do not lapse into doing it for them!

Thinking routines – to embed learning behaviours. For example:

I used to think X but now I think Y

This routine helps students to reflect on how and why their thinking/understanding is changing:

Remind students of the topic you have been working on. Ask them to respond to each of the sentence stems: I used to think..., Now, I think...

Alternatively ask students to write down their views at the beginning of a topic or lesson. Invite them to revisit & update their answer during and at the end in light of what has been learned.

Activities – to stimulate use of the learning habits. For example:

Practise prioritisation

- » Regularly ask students to plan events or activities, e.g. as flow diagrams.
- » Model the habit of sequencing what has to be done, over a range of timescales.
- » Get students to plan action in response to a major emergency (preferably imagined!)

Activities – to stimulate use of the learning habits. For example:

What will it look like when it's finished?

- » Set a task — physical, dramatic, written, practical, spoken, visual — that has clear parameters but which is open-ended.
- » Make WWILLWIF the regular precursor to any action.
- » Ask students to determine WWILLWIF for themselves in conjunction with others.
- » Help them to visualise this in an appropriate form

Teacher Talk – to nudge learning habits and open possibilities. For example:

- “How will you **judge the success** of what you have done?”
- “**What will it look like** when you have done it?”
- “Can you get things **in the right order**: what is urgent, what is important?”
- “Are you **on track** to meet this deadline?”
- “Can you **describe** how you learned that?”
- “**Where else could you use** this skill/idea/knowledge?”
- “Which learning behaviour would be the best one to help you with this?”
- “**Think back** to when you... How did you tackle it then?”
- “**Draft** your ideas in ways which will help you capture what you know

Using 'Could be' language rather than 'Is' language leaves open the possibility that things might not be cut-and-dried, that other avenues might need to be explored. It immediately invites students to be more thoughtful, critical, or imaginative about what they are studying.

How could you use more 'could be' language in your classroom?

Confident Individuals are likely to:

Understand their learning strengths and weaknesses

Describe how their learning is improving

Take time to think ahead

Change plans in the face of new information

Set and review their own achievement goals

Show a consistent and fair approach to others

Seek help from others when necessary

Anticipate blocks and obstacles

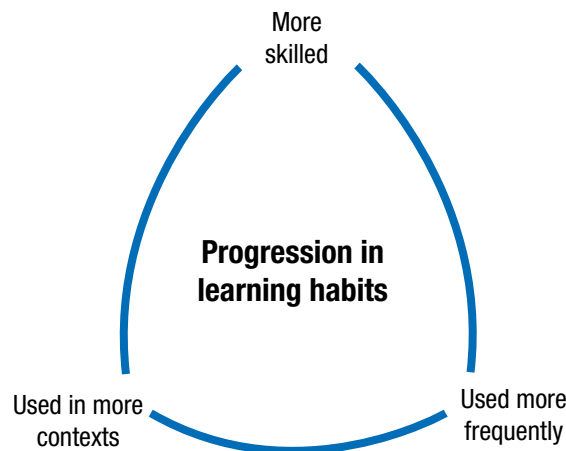
Learn from mistakes

Growing learning behaviours

From behaviours to habits

If the big ambition of the Curriculum for Excellence is to work, the learning qualities suggested have to become more than 'can-do' skills; they have to become habitual tendencies that students adopt in learning. The point is to grow and develop these behaviours to become dispositions or habits. Thus over time, students get better at persevering, questioning, reasoning, changing their ideas and so forth. They use these behaviours more frequently and in a wider range of contexts. They become powerful Successful Learners not just in school but for a lifetime of learning and employment. Curriculum delivery becomes the how of Scotland's 'Developing the Young Workforce'.

Three aspects of progress in building learning habits



I can't	Tell me	I'll try	I see why	I make sure	I am
Little sense of self as learner. Unaware of thinking about how they are learning		Meta Learning			Understand how they learn and use this to control how/what they achieve
Rushes ahead without considering the consequences. Impulsive and unaware of the need to plan		Planning			Considers a range of possibilities before committing to action. Plans with confident uncertainty
Rigid and rule bound. Believes changing one's mind is a weakness		Revising			Flexible and adapts readily to changing circumstances or as new evidence unfolds
Isolated and inward looking. See little point in consulting others		Collaboration			Has a network of positive learning relationships with many people
Insecure and unwilling to express their own opinion. Lacks guiding principles		Interdependence			Self-confident and assured. Behaves with integrity in line with personal principles
Little sense of ends or goals or working towards something purposefully		Perseverance			Has ambitious, long-term goals which they pursue with enthusiasm

This diagram outlines possible starts and ends of the growth of a Confident Individuals. From the unskilled, untrained learner on the left to the learning-powered learner on the right lies a progression that can be mapped. The titles across the top identify the progressive phases of skill and attitude towards their learning which students need to be guided through.

Find out more:

You can find out more about how the learning habits of Building Learning Power could help with growing Confident Individuals (as well as Successful Learners, Responsible Citizens and Effective Contributors) at blp.how/4caps
That also has an expanded on-line version of this card, plus three more for the other CfE capacities (all free of charge).