

Building the habits of...

Responsible Citizens



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

...

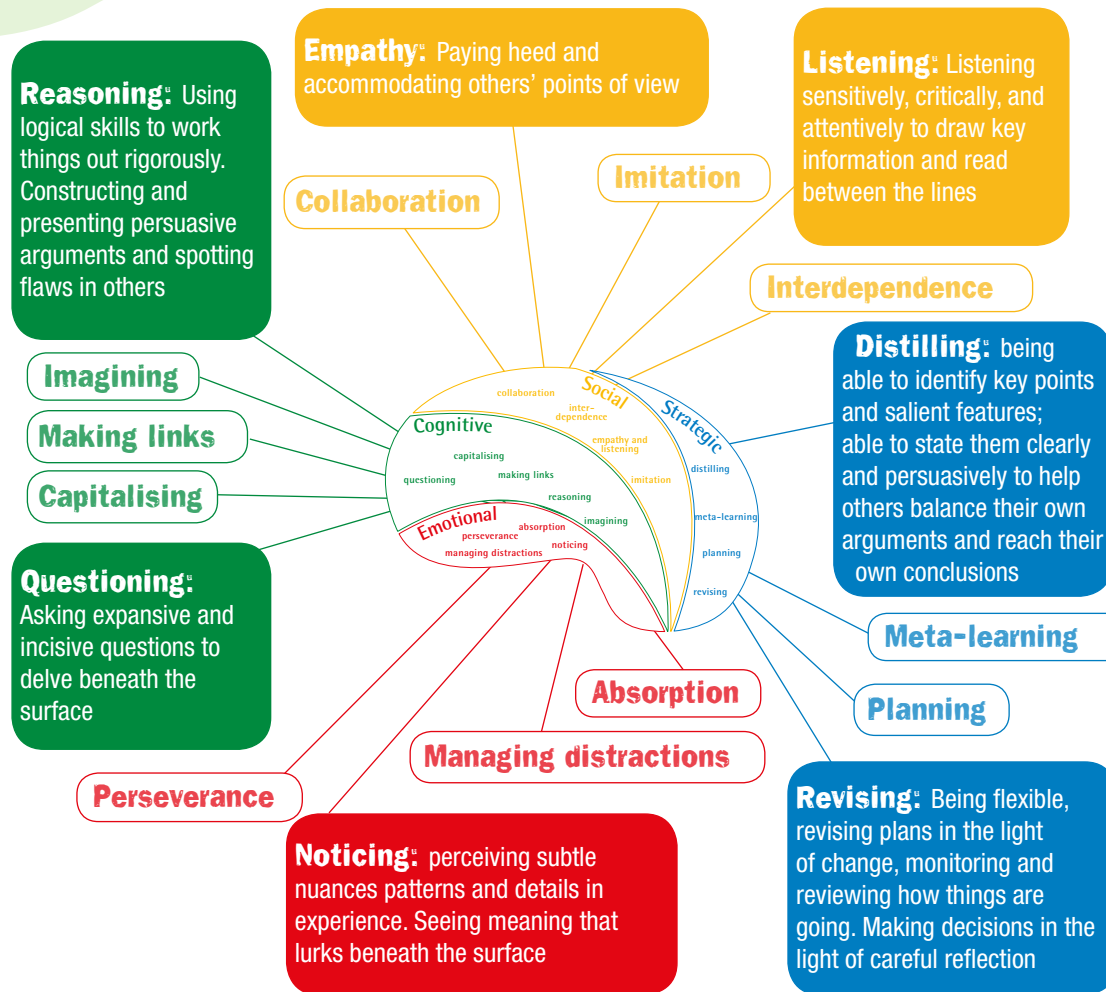
CfE says that Responsible Citizens are:

- respectful of others
- committed to participating responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life

and that they can:

- develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it
- understand different beliefs and cultures
- make informed choices and decisions
- evaluate environmental, scientific, and technological issues
- develop informed, ethical values

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



Responsible Citizens

This resource sketches an approach that schools and teachers could use to deliver the CfE promise of helping young people to become Responsible Citizens.

We see 'Responsible Citizens' as effective critical thinkers; able to form and re-form opinions beliefs and values about the world, and communicate those empathetically with others.

There is a lot of learning for a young person to get through in their school career — a powerful learner can expect to learn more, faster, and more thoroughly. Which, by the way, should help hugely with the 'outcomes' side of the curriculum balance.

The BLP approach

There are two main parts to the approach:

A a model of a learner and learning, in terms of a set of characteristics that work together to make a person a highly capable learner; we use 'learning power' to describe the effect. (Several of these characteristics appear in this card.)

B a view of the kind of pedagogy that will nurture and strengthen the learning characteristics in young people.

These are bound together by the fundamental idea that 'learning is learnable', and by explicit, detailed discussion of how learning works, supported by a rich repertoire of words and action.

Learning behaviours to build powerful Responsible Citizens



Building Learning Power

The architecture of Classroom cultures

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

- **Model contrary points of view**
 - » Always show students there is a different way of viewing every issue
- **Importance of compromise**
 - » Model readiness to think Win-Win
- **School concerns in local, national and global context**
 - » Broaden students' awareness of the wider world and the ways in which thinking globally requires action locally

A shift in relationships



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

- **How things are, how things could be**
 - » Explore goals based on current reality and future aspirations
- **See things from other peoples' points of view**
 - » Provide opportunities for individuals to see things through others' eyes and encourage them to value different opinions.
- **Actively listen to people's contributions**
 - » Encourage everyone to be aware of what students are really saying and seek first to understand before drawing their own conclusions

A shift in learning language



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

- **Enquiry based challenges**
 - » Enable people to dig beneath the surface to deepen levels of engagement and understanding
- **Active listening**
 - » Enable students to use a variety of listening routines developed to suit different circumstances
- **To the contrary**
 - » Design tasks that encourage students to argue in favour of views contrary to their own current viewpoint

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

- **Value everyone's contribution**
 - » Foster a culture of mutual respect where all views are welcomed and given due regard
- **Work towards shared well being**
 - » Ensure that all individuals leave a lesson feeling better about themselves and each other
- **Value silence**
 - » Give students time to think; silence is recognised as a valuable resource

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

Giving the answer

Start

Waiting longer for answers

Start slowly

Re-framing topics and issues in terms of wider contexts.

Experiment with

Training listening techniques with students

Classroom activities and talk to nurture Responsible Citizens



Starters – to help learners think ahead. For example,:

Contentious Issues

Stimulate debate with provocative statements:

- » 'Experimenting on animals is not an option in a civilised society'
- » 'This island has room enough for many more people'
- » 'Live for today since tomorrow is unknown' etc.

[Why do it? To encourage students to consider different sides of a problem.]

Thinking routines – to embed learning behaviours. For example:

Step Inside: Perceive, Know about, Care about'

A visible thinking routine for getting inside others' viewpoints

Three core questions guide students in this routine:

- What can the person perceive?
- What might the person know about or believe?
- What might the person care about?

[Why do it? To encourage students to explore things from others' perspectives.]

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

Building on others' ideas

Prepare the way for students to build on the ideas of others when working in a group by making 'ABC' a routine that you use during whole-class teaching. Once a student has answered a question, ask another student to **Add** to it, to **Build** on it, to **Challenge** it, to **Defend** it, to **Elaborate** on it, or to **Find** a **Flaw** in it. As easy as ABC! This improves students' listening skills at the same time.

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

Exploring different perspectives

- » Offer students different pictures, or descriptions, of the same event
- » Ask students to build the full picture. This is usually more effective done in pairs or small groups than individually.
- » Compare two groups' views of the same event.

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

- "How do you think she is feeling?"
- "Why might he believe that?"
- "Is there **another way** of looking at this?"
- "On the one hand . . . "
- "**On balance**, which do you find more convincing?"
- "What is the right thing to do?"
- "Why do people sometimes not do the right thing?"
- "How much of a **risk** would that be?"
- "Thinking about how other people look at this can lead to **valuable new perspectives**"
- "**Tease out** what's fact and what's opinion"
- "How could you make this more **concise**?"
- "Decide which is the **most important question** to answer"

Use 'Could be' language rather than 'Is' language to leave 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?

Responsible Citizens are likely to:

[Demonstrate tolerance, sensitivity and empathy]

[See things from others' point of view]

[Adopt a principled approach to others]

[Show genuine interest in others' views and beliefs]

[Be willing to accommodate others' perspectives into their personal outlook]

[Think before they jump in]

[Consider pros and cons]

[Use conditional, 'if this ... then that' ... 'type thinking]

[Weigh the evidence]

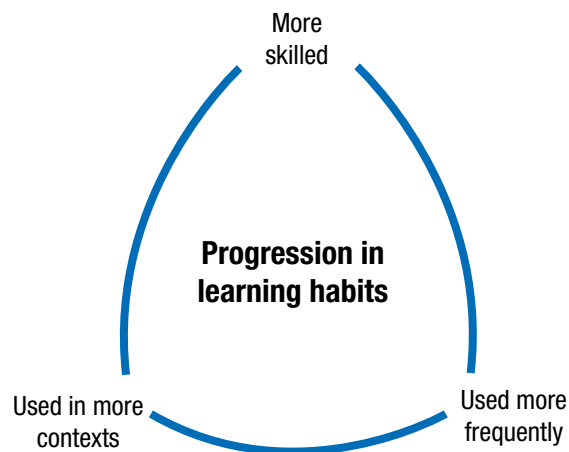
[Change their minds in light of new evidence]

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
Thinks/acts out of self-interest. Hears but does not listen. Intolerant of others with differing views		Empathy & Listening			Acts from secure principles. Listens sensitively to and beyond the words, and responds empathetically
Expects to be given answers. Fears asking questions		Questioning			Seeks and questions new experiences/knowledge to achieve unique results
Has fixed views. Unwilling to re-consider things. Acts despite the evidence		Revising			Is flexible. Considers the evidence and acts accordingly. Reflects before deciding. Monitors and evaluates
Jumps to conclusions. Haphazard. Acts without forethought.		Reasoning			Adopts a strategic approach. Tackles problems logically and methodically
Can't see the wood for the trees.		Distilling			Discerns the value of information, ideas and actions. Knows what to retain for improvement
Lacks focus. Looks but doesn't see, listens but doesn't hear.		Noticing			Seeks deep-seated pattern in order to create meaning.
Firmly based in reality		Imagining			Challenges and scrutinises the status quo to create innovation.

This diagram outlines possible starts and ends of the growth of a Responsible Citizen. 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 Responsible Citizens (as well as Confident Individuals, Successful Individuals 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).