

Building the habit of...

Noticing



The New Challenge

Ofsted now recognises the need for schools to:

- provide their own compelling data of a trajectory of improvement
- successfully promote and support children's 'self confidence, self awareness and understanding how to be a successful learner'.

This together with the current interest in character led education all point to the opportunity for schools to cultivate the habits and attitudes that underpin success and thereby build students' learning characters.

About Learning Habits and Character

Learning habits are the routine ways in which we think and act when faced with life's experiences and challenges. They are second nature to us. Some habits make us very productive and effective; others cause us to learn in constrained and limited ways. Habits are indeed part of our character.

We acquire habits through use: ways of behaving become habituated. If we have a well formed **Noticing** habit, we will have a tendency to use it in all learning experiences. The more we experience the value of a particular habit, the more we will tend to use it throughout our lives.

Like it or not, teachers do help to form a learning character. The ways in which young people perform and behave are influenced by the way teachers orchestrate and guide learning. Deliberately fostering an effective learning character in students is a renewed common purpose for education, shared between students and teachers, parents and society more generally.

A well formed **Noticing** habit involves being **ready, willing, and able** to:

Be attentive to details and subtleties in seeking to understand things

Seek underlying patterns patiently, understanding that connections may take time to emerge.

Actively use all the senses to gather information to build understanding of the world around.

Gain a clear sense of the 'what' of something before considering the 'why' and 'how'.

Recognise that learning is often complex and difficult and takes time and effort to accomplish.

“The difference between something good and something great is attention to detail.”

– Charles R Swindoll

Young people with the habit are likely to:

Be alert and observant

Be willing to take time, be patient

Notice the unusual

Be attentive to details and subtleties

Recognise how others feel

Watch other people carefully

Look for similarities and differences in things

Contemplate quietly

See the woods and the trees

Avoid jumping to conclusions

Be patient etc

Forming the habit

activities to develop... **Noticing**

Quick Wins

Starters to encourage a noticing frame of mind.

Join the dots

Offer students a random set of dots (or picture of the night sky). Invite them to seek items such as:

- A letter of the alphabet
- An animal
- A regular shape
- A face
- Or something linked to the content of the forthcoming lesson

Discuss Noticing Others

- » Set up a display area where students share strategies or 'top tips' that they have found particularly helpful in their own learning. For those offering the 'top tip' this is a **distilling** activity; the resulting gallery of 'top tips' invites students to notice (and adopt) the successful strategies of others.
- » Invite some students to be Learning Detectives. Task them with seeking and capturing examples of effective learning on camera / video. Build the outcomes into a display that helps all students to become more aware of the effective habits of others.

Revealing pictures

Reveal images on the IWB bit by bit.

Ask 'What do you think...

- this might be?'
- is happening here?'
- will fit in this bit?'
- comes next?'
- seems unusual?' and so on.

Students work in pairs or triads. After each bit is revealed, students note what they think and whether/how their ideas have changed as a result.

Visible Thinking Routine

See, Think, Wonder:

- Invite students to make an observation about an object (artwork, image, artifact) or topic. Follow up with what they think might be going on. Encourage backing up their interpretation with reasons.
- Ask students to think about what this makes them wonder about the object or topic.
- The routine works best when a student responds by using the three stems together at the same time, i.e., "I see..., I think..., I wonder...". If not you need to scaffold each response with a follow up question for the next stem.

This routine encourages careful observations and thoughtful interpretations. It helps stimulate curiosity and sets the stage for inquiry. Use it at the beginning of a new unit to motivate student interest. Try it with an object that connects to a topic during the unit of study. Use the routine with an interesting object near the end of a unit to encourage students to further apply their new knowledge and ideas.

Viewing Frame:

Use sets of interesting pictures and cards with a viewing window cut into them. Students place the viewing card over the picture in seeking a range of different features. E.g. something red, made of xx, something denoting happiness, something which suggests what might happen next. Move from concrete to abstract features.

- » Or use a poem. Use the viewer to find the stanza that is most descriptive, that makes them happy, that uses the best simile...
- » Or use a geometrical image, use the viewer to find corresponding angles, perpendicular lines, a reflex angle...
- » Or on an image of the water cycle, use the viewer to find where water vapour is rising, where water is moving downwards, where it would be best to site a farm, a village, a wind turbine...

Similarities and Differences

Use pairs of objects, images, sounds or concepts etc. Invite students to identify as many similarities and differences as they can. Challenge them to find at least 10 of each and to find one that nobody else has noticed. Encourage students to represent these similarities and differences on a venn diagram (similarities in the overlap, differences outside), or in other ways they feel appropriate.

Emotional Climate to build an attentive **Noticing** learning character

Value attentiveness

- » Acknowledge and reward students' patient efforts to identify specific detail.
- » Praise and encourage attention to detail and accuracy.
- » Value accuracy over swiftness

Seek patterns

- » Design learning activities that call for searching for patterns and identifying significant detail.
- » Use the school and its surroundings as a rich environment for the exploration of patterns and detail.

Teachers as character builders

Learning habits form part of our character and develop through use and practice (deliberate or otherwise!). But desirable habits, will survive and flourish better if students are aware of them, realise their value and strive to improve them.

Cultivating habits involves:

- Providing rich and varied **occasions** for **exercising** learning habits
- **Infusing** learning habits into lessons to enhance content understanding
- Recognising and **celebrating** the use and **growth** of learning habits
- **Enabling** students to identify how and when to use learning habits
- Expecting students to take ownership of and **responsibility** for their learning habits
- **Exploring** the development of learning habits with students.

Teachers are influential character builders and need to be mindful of how they help students form, replace, re-form and strengthen their learning habits.

Are your teaching habits helping students' learning habits? Are you building learning characters who will succeed in life?

Take it steady! Think about how and when you might.

Stop/avoid:

- Rushing
- Chasing subject coverage at the expense of real understanding
- Glossing over intricacies
- Telling students what to notice
- Thinking that seeing and noticing are the same thing

Experiment with:

- Noticing using all the senses
- Using Noticing as a springboard into Questioning, Making Links, Imagining and Reasoning.

Start/do more of:

- Encouraging talk about detail
- Rewarding detail in student responses/written work
- Praising precision and accuracy
- Using images as a springboard to attentive noticing
- Building in wait time before taking student answers
- Allowing time for contemplation.

Start slowly:

- Deliberately obscuring detail and allowing students to uncover it
- Saying 'So ?'
- Building common noticing routines across all subjects
- Remaining quiet to encourage students to develop their answers in greater depth

Use all the senses

- » Use of all the senses encourages and heightens noticing skills

Slow down, take time

- » 'Wait time' before listening to student responses enables students to slow and deepen their thinking and appreciate detail.
- » Use of pauses through lessons encourages students to notice how their understanding is progressing.

Talk to nudge Noticing

Teacher talk - as a learning coach

(To ensure students do the thinking for themselves.)

What do you notice about the way... is doing that?

Just watch/listen for a while. What's happening? Wait a little longer. What has changed?

Be patient for a bit longer

Do you notice any patterns here?

Great! Your patience is rewarded. You noticed some (unusual) patterns/ really useful details there.

Do you notice any differences between xxx and yyy?

Is there more to be discovered here?

Student self-talk

(As the skill becomes a habit, and as the habit shapes part of the learning character, look out for students who say (or think) the following)

Is there more to this than I'm seeing now?

I hadn't noticed that before.

Oh! It's becoming clearer now.

I think there must be a pattern here somewhere.

What seems to be going on here?

I noticed [something different/unusual] on my way to school today.

If I wait a little longer this will become clearer.

That was worth waiting for.

Have I missed anything?

What's really going on?

How does this fit with the big picture?

Have I got in deeply enough?

Strengthening the habit

Student self-review

In order to strengthen learning habits, it is important for students and their teachers to reflect on the specific attributes that contribute to a well-formed habit.

Ipsative and formative approaches to reviewing learning habits place students at the centre of the process of developing their learning habits and strengthening their learning character.

Here is one way of keeping the noticing habit alive and growing.

Learning Mats:

are A3 or A4 laminated sheets that show various aspects of a learning habit. They are kept on desks or used as part of wall display.

Students refer to them during lessons, using them as prompts about the finer aspects of a learning habit.

Using Learning Mats

Learning Mats can be in 'teacher speak' or 'student speak', and can be used:

- To raise awareness of habit
- To spread the school's common language for learning
- As an aide-memoire for students and teachers
- As a self-assessment support for students
- As an audit tool to support teacher planning.

Poor Noticing



↔

Good Noticing



Stuck? Noticing Problem Solver!

I'm stuck because...	Get unstuck by...
Not sure what I'm looking for	Try looking for: similarities, differences, curious things. Do you notice any patterns?
Not focusing my attention	Try finding details that nobody else has yet noticed
Not sure how I need to notice	Try using all of your senses, in addition to 'good looking'
Don't know why I need to notice	Try creating your own explanations and asking questions based on what you have noticed

How well did I spot things?



I'm thinking 'this is interesting'

I thought about what to look for

I used all my senses

What I noticed raised interesting questions for me

I really kept my mind on it

I managed to avoid being distracted

I described to myself what I had observed

I asked myself 'have I missed anything?'

I...

Noticing

These At-A-Glance cards are based on the practical framework of learning capacities and habits known as Building Learning Power. The framework provides a clear picture of what it takes to be a good learner. The purpose of the approach is to grow students' Learning Character and Habits. In so doing Building Learning Power develops the appetite and ability to learn in different ways, and shifts the responsibility for learning to learn from teacher to student.

Find out more: www.buildinglearningpower.com

