

Building the habit of...

Persevering



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 **Persevering** 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 **Persevering** habit involves being **ready, willing, and able** to.

Keep going in the face of difficulties, channelling the energy of frustration productively, marshalling positive emotions to succeed.

Enjoy working at the edge of our comfort zone, understanding that learning is often a slow and uncertain process that requires grit, risk-taking and different ways of working.

Recognise that being stuck is the point at which new learning begins; seeing stuckness as a site of interest, not shame.

Relish working towards ever more challenging goals without fear of 'failure'.

Give it one more go; try different methods; come back to it later; seek support and advice to achieve a breakthrough.

“**Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all a love of what you are doing.**”
- Edison Arantes do Nascimento Pele

Young people with the habit are likely to:

Try different ways of tackling a task

See 'not knowing' as an interesting place to be

Display grit

Take risks

Cope maturely with frustration

Relish challenging goals

Develop strategies to overcome being stuck

Believe they can improve with effort

Try hard, maintain optimism

Manage own learning climate

Stick at difficult tasks

Forming the habit

activities to develop... **Persevering**

Quick Wins

Build Persistence

- » Orchestrate tasks that only a few students will be able to complete successfully. Use this as a vehicle to discuss the negative and positive emotions around persisting. Help students to identify when they are able to persevere successfully and how it feels when they do.
- » Reward and comment on their effort, rather than attainment.

Seek Challenge

- » Plan your lessons around the higher attainers to ensure that the level of challenge is raised.
- » Make sure that extension tasks genuinely extend, and are not just 'more of the same'

What do I do when I'm stuck?

- » Work with students to create useful questions to ask themselves and strategies to adopt when stuck.
- » Be sure that 'ask teacher' comes some way down the list.
- » Create 'stuck poster' displays as reminders.
- » Adopt a 'C3B4Me' strategy – do three things before asking the teacher.
- » Use red/amber/green cards for students to indicate that they are stuck/so-so/fine.
- » Treat being stuck as an interesting place to be.

Where could I start?

Use Origami to help students explore keeping going with a challenge.

The Origami task should be demanding and lead to frustration and the tendency to give up and stop trying.

Show the completed origami shape. Tell students that "Everyone can make one of these if they persevere." Hand out the origami instructions and paper. Watch how students tackle the task.

The important aspect of the exercise is the debrief. Through discussion, explore:

- "How did you feel when you were making the shape?"
- "Who wanted to give up, but didn't?"
- "What made you keep going? E.g. could see the goal, someone helped?"
- "Did you find yourself saying 'I'm no good at ...'?"
- "What did it feel like to see some people doing it quickly?"
- "Who completed the shape? What did this feel like?"
- "What made you give up?"

Explore further with the group — what makes us give up, what helps us keep going?

Lifting the level of challenge

Audit your Schemes of Work, and in particular consider the intended learning outcomes.

- » Ask: Do the intended learning outcomes challenge students to exercise higher level thinking skills, or are they mostly rooted in knowledge acquisition?
- » Use Blooms Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain to help shape learning objectives:
 - » Outcomes related to **knowledge acquisition**, use verbs like: define, write, state, list, recall, label. (i.e. List the main elements of...)
 - » Outcomes related to **comprehension**, use verbs like: explain, identify, select, illustrate, classify, represent. (i.e. Identify the key purposes of...)
 - » Outcomes related to **application**, use verbs like: predict; construct, find, use, show, perform. (i.e. Select activities from a given set... (for a defined purpose)
 - » Outcomes related to **analysis or synthesis**, use verbs like: analyse, relate, justify, conclude, compare, differentiate. (i.e. Compare and contrast the key ideas behind...)
 - » Outcomes related to **evaluation**, use verbs like: judge, assess, support, choose, evaluate, defend, criticise. (i.e. Assess the importance of...)
- » Check for balance across the range. Could you use more of the higher-level ones as a means of deepening understanding and lifting the level of challenge ?

Emotional Climate to encourage Persevering

Valuing effort

- » Students are praised and rewarded for effort
- » Praise is given for managing distractions and remaining focused

Goal orientation

- » Students are encouraged to create their own clear end-goals.

A perseverant learning character

- » Students are supported and encouraged as they step into risky, challenging areas
- » All students have access to challenging material at an appropriate level

Building in 'wait time'

- » 'No hands up' tactics are used
- » Reflection time is built into lessons

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:

- Making things too easy
- Always answering their questions
- Encouraging 'learned helplessness' by doing it for them
- Intervening too early

Experiment with:

- Designing problem solving activities to enable content understanding without 'telling' students.
- Intriguing students with something that is open to several interpretations

Start/do more of:

- Talking about how tricky learning can be, even for you
- Helping students answer their own questions
- Responding more speculatively to student questions
- Assuming that students welcome challenge
- Praise effort, stickability, control of negative emotions

Start slowly:

- Withdrawing some of the scaffolding
- Injecting more challenge
- Ensuring that extension work is genuinely extending, and not just more of the same
- Devise more open-ended activities
- Allowing students to fail in safety

Growing Perseverance

- » Ready solutions and answers are not automatically provided.
- » Students are encouraged to stick with challenges and try other ways of tackling things.
- » Opportunities to get stuck and find a way forward are in evidence
- » Stuck prompts are displayed
- » Strategies to control negative emotions are discussed.

Talk to nudge Persevering

Teacher talk - as a learning coach

(To ensure students do the thinking for themselves.)

Slow down. Stay positive

What happened when you got stuck before ? What did you do to work it out?

If you aren't sure how to do this – What would help you?

It's when you get stuck that you really start to learn

Everyone finds learning tricky at times

Take a break from this for while and come back to it later

How did it feel to persist with xxxx

Great ! You have come through the confused feeling. What helped you?

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)

It's worth me putting the effort in

I will do it

I made a mistake here – I wonder why that is?

That's an interesting mistake

I need to avoid that distraction

If it is hard, I am learning

I can do this if I change tack

When the going gets tough . . .

Let's give it a go and see what happens

That's a goal worth going for

I can't do it - yet

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 persevering habit alive and growing.

Perseverance Grid

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Characterised by	Unphased by being stuck knowing they have the strategies to overcome it.	I'm looking out for new strategies to help me to ...	Manages own learning environment independently according to a positive-learning value system.	Sees challenge as opportunity to develop skills and make progress.
Organised	Takes risks underpinned by relevant strategies. Analyses failures and mistakes positively to better understand.	I'm organised now to ensure everything gets done.	Overcomes and manages any external discouragement, negativity, peer pressure.	Systematically plans and organises learning.
Value	Is curious about mistakes. Uses written and verbal feedback.	I can keep going because I really care about/interested in this goal. Has a growth mindset.	Has worked out 'environmental strategies' to help them through the hard slog/practice.	Uses to clarify and challenge assumptions.
Respond	Initiates and gets unstuck positively.	Schools are beginning to explore how they might use the persevering grid to yield insights into: - understanding the subtleties of perseverance; - providing/generating a school-wide language for discussing perseverance; - supporting task design to ensure that activities require and exercise higher order perseverant behaviours; - auditing curriculum provision; - informing all aspects of Assessment, Recording and Reporting; - supporting student self-assessment - supporting and informing the mentoring process, and to set student-level development targets; - informing what you look for during learning walks and when monitoring your students' growth as learners; - evaluating the effectiveness of your interventions.		
Receive	Uses success and reward.		Aware of what distracts them and tries to control it.	Resists the inclination to stick with easy, can-do activities.
Missing	No confidence.		Prone to be distracted. Put off by lack of resources. Sensitive to negativity.	Gives up easily. Craves constant support. Put off by 'too much to do'.
	Dealing with challenge		Managing distractions	Dealing with challenge
				Goal orientation

What's Persevering made up of?

What makes up this multifaceted concept and how do the components grow over time? The big components of perseverance might include how we:

- deal with being stuck
- develop emotional toughness
- manage our learning environment
- deal with challenge
- are driven by goals.

This grid aims to map these big components of perseverance and unpack how they might grow. Students become increasingly skilful and wedded to the ideas as they move through the phases.

able given goals.

Have a sense of what they want something to look like. Visualises end results.

Little sense of ends or goals or working towards something purposefully.

Find out more about the growth of Perseverance

Scan this QR Code with your phone or tablet, or use the web address below in a web browser.

www.buildinglearningpower.com/?p=921



Persevering

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

