

Building the habit of...

Resourcing Learning



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 **Resourcing** 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 Resourcing Learning habit involves being ready, willing, and able to:

Learn from many different sources – other people, books, the internet, music, the environment, experience...

Make intelligent use of all kinds of things to aid learning

Seeking novel ways of solving problems by exploiting the potential of what is around them

Improve physical skills and absorb ideas, strategies and thinking patterns by observing the approach and detail of how others do things

Adapt and adopt the successful habits and values of others into their own learning repertoire

“**Watch your thoughts for they become words, watch your words for they become actions, watch your actions, for they become habits, watch your habits for they become your character, watch your character for it becomes your destiny.**”
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Young people with the habit are likely to:

Be alert to supportive opportunities

Use all kinds of resources with discrimination

Make the best of a bad job

Create their own learning resources

Watch others carefully

Consciously seek to imitate successful strategies

Appear independent, self confident and self reliant

Pick up different ways of doing things

Quick Wins

Use display to record key learning

- » Set aside an area of display where students are asked to share any strategies or 'top tips' that they have found particularly helpful in their own learning. For those offering the 'top tip' it is a distilling activity, but the resulting gallery of 'top tips' invites students to adopt the successful strategies of others.

Expert interviews

- » Set up interviews with people who can do something really well. Develop a series of questions with students to uncover exactly what the 'expert' does. E.g. What sort of preparation is there? What does it feel like? What sort of thinking, habits of mind, values or beliefs are helpful? Create a checklist of key aspects to imitate. Extend with students in the role of real or imaginary expert, encouraging them to assess their own subconscious knowledge of how to succeed.

Ideas Factory

- » Invite students to become famous inventors who are going to come up with a new gadget to help other people. It must be useful and commercially viable. Use mind-maps to show the needs of their potential customers and gadgets that could be invented to meet the needs. What materials would they need to make it? Who do they know with the skills to help? Where might they find out relevant information? Success criteria for the task should focus on the way groups have thought about using resources rather than on the finished gadget.

Forming the habit

activities to develop... Resourcing Learning

Multiply your impact (and save yourself time).

Record yourself demonstrating key techniques or teaching points, teaching new content, giving detailed instructions etc.

Make this freely available in the classroom so that students can *independently* access your expertise as and when *they* feel the need. Extend it by getting the students themselves to create such recordings to add to the resource bank, perhaps focussing on how they were successful, which particular strategies they found helpful, and any hints or tips they might wish to pass on.

Use these resources to enable students to independently access guidance without the need to refer to you, or to support differentiation, or to help students who have missed a session to catch up, or to support a 'cover' lesson, or as a revision guide.

Helpful Habits – discuss the idea of helpful and unhelpful habits.

Explore this through role plays. Use imaginary characters to create more emotional distance. Discuss peer and family influence on forming habits. How many of our habits do we pick up from those around us? To what extent can we choose our habits?

Set up a Helpful Habit board for tips from students to others about habits which might help them to achieve their long or short term goals.

In pairs, identify habits that could easily be changed (ie always eating cornflakes for breakfast), and discuss how this came to be a habit. Decide to change one habit for a set period of time. Discuss what happened. How did the new 'habit' feel the first time? How did it feel after 21 times? How could you use this experience to imitate other people's helpful habits?

Scrapheap Challenge

- » Collect a pile of unrelated objects, or ask students to bring in one object each and mix them in random groupings – eg a copper tube, piece of cloth, felt pen, blu-tack. Challenge students to make as many things as they can from the objects, using all of them but nothing else. Discuss examples of particularly imaginative/effective use of materials and whether these ideas can be used in another context.

Emotional Climate to build a Resourcing Learning character

Good copying is valued

- » Adopting the successful habits and values of others is encouraged.
- » Plagiarism is not !

Successful learning resources are a topic of interest and conversation

- » Display celebrates successful strategies that can be copied

Resources are freely accessible

- » Students are encouraged to decide on the right tools for the job at hand, to find them, and to use them.

Independence is nurtured

- » Students are enabled to make choices about their learning, and to reflect on how successful those choices have been in accomplishing the task

Confident uncertainty is the prevailing culture

- » Students confidently use a range of resources of their own choosing to attempt to solve problems

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:

- Telling/giving students exactly what they need
- Telling students that it's bad to copy
- Spoon-feeding

Experiment with:

- Offering students the chance to reflect on how an expert might do this to provide an opportunity for mental rehearsal
- Looking for different ways to solve the same problem
- Pairing students with differing learning habit strengths as learning buddies to broaden horizons

Start/do more of:

- Using 'learning heroes'
- Rewarding successful imitation
- Making resources freely available
- Placing responsibility with the students to make appropriate choices

Start slowly:

- Withdrawing the scaffold so that students do more for themselves
- Acting as coach rather than instructor
- Using older students as learning role models for younger ones

Self-reliance is prized

- » Expect students to do things for themselves, and rise to the challenge
- » Open-ended activities are often used

Opportunism is evident

- » Students make the best of difficult situations by making imaginative use of resources and other people

Talk to nudge Resourcing Learning

Teacher talk - as a learning coach

(To ensure students do the thinking for themselves.)

Where else might we go to find out?

What could we use to help us with this?

Who might help you?

If you could find people to help with this, who would you ask?

What else could we use to improve it further?

What led you to choose to use that?

Look very carefully at someone you think is doing really well and think about how you can do it like that

Who have you learnt something from today?

What/Who do you think would be a good model for this ?

What was it that did next that really made the difference?

What did ____ believe that helped him to succeed?

Picture doing this. Ask them some questions in your head about how they did it, before you try it yourself.

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)

Who does this really well ?

What would . . . do/try/think next ?

What are they doing that I'm not ?

What else might help ?

Is there anything else around that might be useful?

What could I use this for ?

When else have I come across a problem like this ?

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 Resourcing Learning habit alive and growing.

Bronze	Silver	Gold
I am learning to imitate adults	I can recognise a positive role model	I can be a positive role model for others
I can copy others to develop my coordination	I can imitate others to develop my physical skills	I use and adapt my physical skills to work independently with others
I can copy good behaviour	I am able to recognise positive behaviour	I can recognise and demonstrate positive behaviour
I watch what my friends are doing and how they are doing it	I look out for the successful ways my friends learn	I copy the successful ways my friends learn
I know who to ask for help	I know that different people will help me with different tasks	I know who will help me to learn in the most effective way
I use only the things my teacher gives me	I am beginning to use different sources, such as the internet, to help with my learning	I can use the internet effectively to help my learning
I prefer to use resources that I am familiar with	I keep an eye out for other things that might help me to learn	I can create my own learning resources when necessary

In this school every pupil has a bound copy of all of the learning habit progression maps. They;

- are regularly referred to in lessons
- deepen the language of learning
- support pupil self-assessment,
- guide pupil mentoring/coaching,
- monitor progression
- set targets for improvement.

The school now wonders how it ever managed without the insight afforded by progression maps of this kind!

What does getting better look like?

One primary school has devised progression maps like the one illustrated here for Resourcing Learning. Skills in the bronze list can, they believe, be achieved by KS1 pupils. The silver list was designed for lower KS2, and gold list for upper KS2. Obviously there will be exceptions – some pupils will be well ahead of this, while others will remain doggedly behind!

How might such progression lists be extended for KS3 and KS4?

Resourcing Learning

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

