Building Learning Power
Education for a Learning Life

Professor Guy Claxton
What is the point of school?

In a world of the internet, global travel, global warming, non-traditional families, decline of orthodox religion, chat rooms, celebrity, smart pills and sexualised children… Where the Qualifications Game requires a regular diet of ‘losers’ to give value to ‘winning’…

How can all young people get a winning education?
Learning how to learn

In times of change, the learners will inherit the earth, while the merely learned will remain beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists. Eric Hoffer

Since we cannot know what knowledge they will need, it is senseless to try to teach it in advance. Instead our job must be to turn out people who love learning so much, and who learn so well, that they will be able to learn whatever needs to be learned. John Holt
Building Learning Power: the ambition

Schools that
raise results...AND
engage pupils...AND
enthuse teachers...AND
prepare lifelong learners
young people confident, capable and independent enough to thrive in a complex world
What really works – the 5th generation of ‘learning to learn’

‘Improving learning’ in this sense means more than
1. hints and tips
2. learning styles
3. knowledge about thinking and learning
4. stand-alone skills courses

We need INFUSION…
BLP – the infusion method

Making a number of small changes that are
coherent – all aimed at building learning power
pervasive – run across the whole school
practical – not threatening
precise – not airy-fairy or wishful thinking
sustained – not quick fix or latest fad
cumulative – build over time

It’s easy! Simple things to do that make a real difference
And it’s hard!! Requires commitment, courage and support
How good a learner are you?
Rate yourself 1 (not like me) to 4 (totally me)

1. I keep getting smarter
2. I love learning new things
3. I’m willing to have a go at something new
4. If something’s hard, I keep at it till I’ve got it
5. I can blot out distractions when I’m concentrating
6. I like to imagine how things could be different
7. I think about how I can improve what I’ve done
8. I think how I can apply new things I’ve learned
9. I like exploring things with other people
10. I wonder how things seem to other people
Time to think and chat...

Share one area where you are a strong learner, and one where you are not so strong

Think of one way in which one area could ‘borrow strength’ from the other
Time to think and chat...

Improve the questionnaire
  What are powerful (real-life) learners like?
  Take one item away and add a new one

How could you use this with your students?
  What would you have to modify?
The vocabulary of learning

Wondering – questioning, doubting, curiosity
Engaging – risking, persisting, recuperating
Exploring – noticing, concentrating, researching
Experimenting – tinkering, practising, redrafting
Imagining – rehearsing, dreaming, empathising
Reasoning – analysing, arguing, critiquing
Collaborating – listening, team-playing,
Reflecting – planning, self-evaluating, transferring,
Time to think and chat...

Think of a student you know quite well. Write a short ‘report’ on her or him as a developing learner, using the vocabulary of learning.

Share with your neighbour. Compare your pen-portraits. How easy or hard was it to look through these spectacles?
The 4th lens...

Beyond Ability, Achievement and Conduct

locking children into a view of their ‘ability’ or ‘potential’ is unjustified and damaging

People flourish and fade in all kinds of unpredictable ways all the time

Believing in fixed ability makes ‘having to try’ feel like an admission of failure, and so undermines determination for ‘bright’ as well as ‘weak’ students
Some aspects of a BLP culture

The teacher
- language – talking about learners and learning
- example – the power of imitation

The classroom
- activities – split-screen lessons
- environment – e.g. displays

The school
- a community of explorers – everyone a learner
- the vital signs – indicators of progress
Managing distractions

Undistracted

Absorbed. Friday 19 March 2004

... as he took his last two steps, Courtney shivered with fear. He got in to the flat and fell through the floor. Courtney found a key. He got up and opened the door. He found himself in a big maze. Courtney ran back to the door but it didn’t open from the inside. He ran around looking for a way to get out. He then found the owner of the flat and he said “find your way out.”

Not a very helpful owner then?? You have worked well at ignoring distractions today as well. Good boy.
Managing distractions

Absorbed x x x x x x x x
Undisturbed
Distressed

Tuesday 23 March 2002

Trenton woods
As I was walking I heard a noise. I was getting closer and closer. I looked around. But nothing. Nothing was in sight. I started to shiver with fear. I looked around something hit me. I fell on the floor. I got back up. I hear the noise again.

You have created a great atmosphere in this novel.
Thea

She has ginger hair. She has brown eyes. She is a white girl. Her name is Ginger. She has got freckles. She’s 9 years old. She is a nice girl. She’s friendly. She likes rock climbing and swimming and football.

Well done - you have described what she looks like and told me something about her personality.

Very good work today Thea!
Collaborating
Questioning
# Self evaluation

## MY WORK PROGRESS IN MATHEMATICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHERE I LOST MARKS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I did not answer all the questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Some of my answers were wrong</td>
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<td>3. I did not show working out where I should have</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I left out some important things, e.g. ( +, -, x, / )</td>
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<td>5. I did not copy out numbers correctly</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. My work was messy and untidy. Numbers were not clearly written. Work was not well organised.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. My addition, subtraction, multiplication or division was poorly done. Write in which one(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I did not read the questions carefully</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I did not understand the work and did not see the teacher for help</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I rushed through my work</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. It was not my best work. I could have done better. How?</td>
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</table>
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Time to think and chat...

In my classroom, I could
  do more of.....
  do less of.....
  start doing.....
  stop doing.....
  keep doing.....
Time to think and chat…

- How would you convince a skeptic that, in three years time, your school was creating significantly more powerful learners?
- Identify 5 key indicators
  - they must be observable and precise
    (not ‘The children are more confident’)
  - at least 2 of them must be measurable or countable
- Share with another pair: question each others’ decisions.
The challenge: are we serious?

Anticipating the bear-traps
1. Fizzling out; keeping it fresh; progression
2. Holding the vision (against everything else)
3. Parental expectations
4. External demands and standards
5. ....
6. ....
Sources of inspiration and support

**Students** – give them ownership

**Champions** – give enthusiasts their head

**Parents** – recruit their enthusiasm

**Networking** – visit other schools

**Critical friends** – a learning review

**Research** – Perkins, Costa, BLP

**CPD** – training days, foundation course
'The maths SATs paper this year had a lot of reasoning. The class did brilliantly at those sorts of questions – even children who would not previously have attempted them… All the children who’ve been through BLP attempted every question from all sorts of angles, even though they might not have got the right answer. The children are much freer, much more courageous. And if they don’t find a solution one way they’ll find another solution some other way.'

BrEAZ teacher
Solihull’s BLP evaluation

Students’ confidence, attitudes and KS test results improve
Impact on students’ language development
Teachers talk and planning shifts to learning
Teacher engagement and enthusiasm increases
Collaborative / coaching CPD increases
Greater parental involvement
Uptake in governor induction
SIP focus on ‘What kinds of learners do we want our children to be?’
GCSE results

For us the results have been fantastic. We have changed the ethos from a school that had behaviour as its prime focus and talking point to a school that focuses on learning. Our percentages of 5 A*-C at GCSE have gone from 17% a few years ago to 33% last year. This year I originally predicted 44%, but I suspect it will be closer to 50% [The Fisher Family Trust prediction was 24%. In fact the school achieved was 51%] All this is largely attributable to BLP’

Armando di Finizio
Deputy Headteacher, City Academy, Bristol
What about scientific research?

- 'For nearly 20 years it has been known that students with more elaborated conceptions of learning perform better in public examinations at age 16'
- 'The more students are supported as autonomous learners, the higher their school performance'
- 'Learning about learning has more impact than study skills'
- 'When teachers learn more about learning, the effectiveness of a school improves and increased performance follows'

Chris Watkins, National School Improvement Network
Why does BLP matter?

“Most young people fear that their world will generally become more challenging... [For many] their live are riddled with insecurity; insecurity becomes an integral part of growing up... Schools are seen as failing to equip young people with the ability to learn for life rather than exams... “They need to teach the knowledge but they never teach you how to learn.”

Industry Society Report.
Emily agrees

"I guess I could call myself smart. I mean I can usually get good grades. Sometimes I worry though that... I'm just a tape recorder repeating back what I've heard. I worry that once I'm out of school, and people don't keep handing me information with questions... I'll be lost".

Emily, 15
Why Kyle goes to school

“...I go to school to get my mind stretched. We get things to explore that get harder and harder, so our learning muscles get stronger and stronger. Then we’ll be able to learn whatever we need for the rest of our lives. As powerful learners we will be able to learn new jobs, play new games, face new challenges, make new friends. Oh, and by the way, we’ll do better in our exams, too!”
Learning how to learn

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Want to know more?

For copies of Building Learning Power contact the TLO enquiry line on: 0117 9898204

or visit: www.tloshop.co.uk

For information about BLP workshops, courses and partnerships email: info@tloltd.co.uk

You can contact me at: guy.claxton@bristol.ac.uk