

Excellent Experiences for All

A Framework for Learning, Teaching and Assessment in East Renfrewshire



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Introduction

East Renfrewshire Education Department's vision statement, '**Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences**', indicates our aspirations for all children and young people and places responsibility on everyone who works in the service to meet the needs and ambitions of all. We have a duty to ensure that all children and young people have the necessary skills, capabilities and attributes to be successful learners who actively contribute to their communities and wider society.

This document elaborates on the '**Excellent Experiences**' aspect of the vision statement by providing an overview of what should constitute high quality learning, teaching and assessment in every playroom, classroom and learning environment in East Renfrewshire. It will assist staff in all establishments in delivering experiences and securing outcomes of the highest quality for all learners.

“The experiences our learners have and their engagement in them are crucial to raising attainment and achievement. It is the quality of those experiences which make the difference.”¹

Our work in this area is clearly aligned to the National Improvement Framework, Local Improvement Plan and Advancing Excellence and Equity in East Renfrewshire and is drawn from a wide body of evidence and research, including our own local intelligence. Our staff are our most valuable resource. We place great importance on investing in them to ensure that they are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver creative and engaging experiences for all learners 'informed by an understanding of current pedagogical research...and committed to learning as a lifelong process.' (Donaldson, 2010) ²

It is recognised nationally, that the high standard of education in East Renfrewshire, which has been sustained over many years, leads to positive outcomes for learners. We are ambitious for each and every one of our children and young people and whilst attainment is consistently strong, we work continually to raise the bar for all. We recognise it is essential that these experiences must occur in a climate characterised by nurturing and supportive relationships, where learners feel secure and confident to take risks and think creatively.

Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment do not sit in isolation in ensuring excellent experiences for all learners. The curriculum we deliver and teaching approaches employed must engage children and young people as they journey from a stimulating and inspiring early years experience, through the Broad General Education (BGE) into a successful Senior Phase which leads to positive and sustained post school destinations. Schools in East Renfrewshire are supported to build a curriculum which is unique to its context and meets the needs of all its learners as outlined in the Refreshed Narrative for Scotland's Curriculum (2019). ³ How the curriculum is delivered, is of equal importance.



¹ East Renfrewshire Education Department 'Advancing Excellence and Equity in East Renfrewshire' 2016

² Donaldson, G. 'Teaching Scotland's Future' Scottish Government 2010

³ Scottish Government, 'Scotland's Curriculum- Curriculum for Excellence' 2019

No single approach will improve learning, teaching, assessment and attainment. However, this paper will highlight five key components which are already proven to raise attainment. These are:



Learning Intentions, Success Criteria & Differentiation



Effective Questioning & Feedback



Metacognition & Self-Regulation



Collaboration



Motivation & Engagement

Each of these areas should be routinely integrated into the practice of every practitioner in East Renfrewshire. A clear understanding of these components and the reasons for employing them will have the greatest impact on pedagogy, particularly in terms of closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

The purpose of this document is to provide an effective learning, teaching and assessment framework to support educational establishments in their efforts to ensure that our children and young people experience consistently high quality learning experiences. By improving educational outcomes for all children and young people in East Renfrewshire, we will enable them to become confident, responsible and effective learners prepared with the knowledge, skills and attributes required to become successful adults. At the heart of our inclusive framework lie culture and relationships.

Without a shared understanding of wellbeing underpinned by children's rights and a focus on positive relationships, the climate will not be conducive to ensuring that all children and young people flourish through excellent experiences.

These experiences should be a consistent feature of practice across all areas of the curriculum and are key in realising the ambitions of our authority strategies which support specific curricular areas.

Leadership Strategy

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework

Education Department Curricular Strategies

Career Long Professional Learning Programme

A robust programme of CLPL and online support materials will assist in further developing the confidence and pedagogical knowledge of staff.

Creative, innovative practitioners who are empowered leaders of learning within their own playroom or classroom are key in ensuring that all children and young people are included, active participants and leaders of their own learning.



Learning Intentions & Success Criteria

“ Staff should discuss with learners what they are expected to learn. They should clarify and share learning intentions and success criteria and appropriate experiences for achieving these. ” (Building the Curriculum 5)⁴



Effective teaching is defined as that which leads to improved outcomes for learners. There are many different elements required to ensure high-quality learning experiences and this also relies on highly skilled staff who work with children and young people to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful.

Effective pedagogy, or high-quality teaching, will likely involve a practitioner using a skilful combination of learning and teaching approaches at different times used to maximise impact on learner progress.

Why are Learning Intentions and Success Criteria Important?

Learning Intentions provide clarity in the particular aspect of learning being taken forward. When shared, Learning Intentions ensure learners have a clear understanding of the focus for learning. Success Criteria summarise the key steps or ingredients the student needs in order to fulfil the learning intention – the main things to do, include or focus on. (Clarke 2001) Quality assessment is totally dependent on the use of effective success criteria. When learners become used to working to success criteria and contributing to their development they become more independent in their approach to learning, more able to assess their own achievements and identify any areas for improvement.

“ If learners are to take more responsibility for their own learning, then they need to know what they are going to learn, how they will recognise when they have succeeded and why they should learn it in the first place. ” (Learning Unlimited, 2004)⁵



⁴ Scottish Government (2011) 'Building the Curriculum 5'

⁵ Learning Unlimited (2004) 'An Introduction to Assessment for Learning'

Learning Intentions & Success Criteria

Learning Intentions		
Core elements	Key features of effective Learning Intentions	Common mistakes with Learning Intentions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to Experiences and Outcomes Describe what the learners should know, understand or be able to do for new learning Focus on knowledge and transferrable skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include transferrable knowledge and skill, not the context for learning Use clear language that the learners can understand; including Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) language Shared with learners and referred to throughout the learning experience Linked with planned assessment activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear and too wordy Focused on the task, activity or context rather than the learning Do not reflect the standards within the Experiences and Outcomes Are not shared effectively with the learners

Success Criteria		
Core elements	Key features of effective Success Criteria	Common mistakes with Success Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The measure used to decide if a learner has met the Learning Intention and also how well How the learning will be assessed Improve understanding and are clear, relevant and measurable definitions of success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to Learning Intentions and specific to an activity Written in appropriate language for the learner and limited in number Differentiated according to the needs of the learners; scaffold and support learning Co-constructed and agreed with the learners Supports teacher, peer and self-assessment feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeat the Learning Intention rather than defining how to achieve it Focus on the product or completion of the task e.g. complete Pg 21 Not measurable and too wordy Do not reflect the learning within the Learning Intention Not referred to throughout the lesson or in the plenary

Differentiation

“Differentiation is as much about an attitude to children and young people as it is about an attitude to teaching. If we see ‘the class’ as a single entity, and plan with that in mind, the learning will only be at the right level for a handful of learners.” (Cowley, 2018)⁶

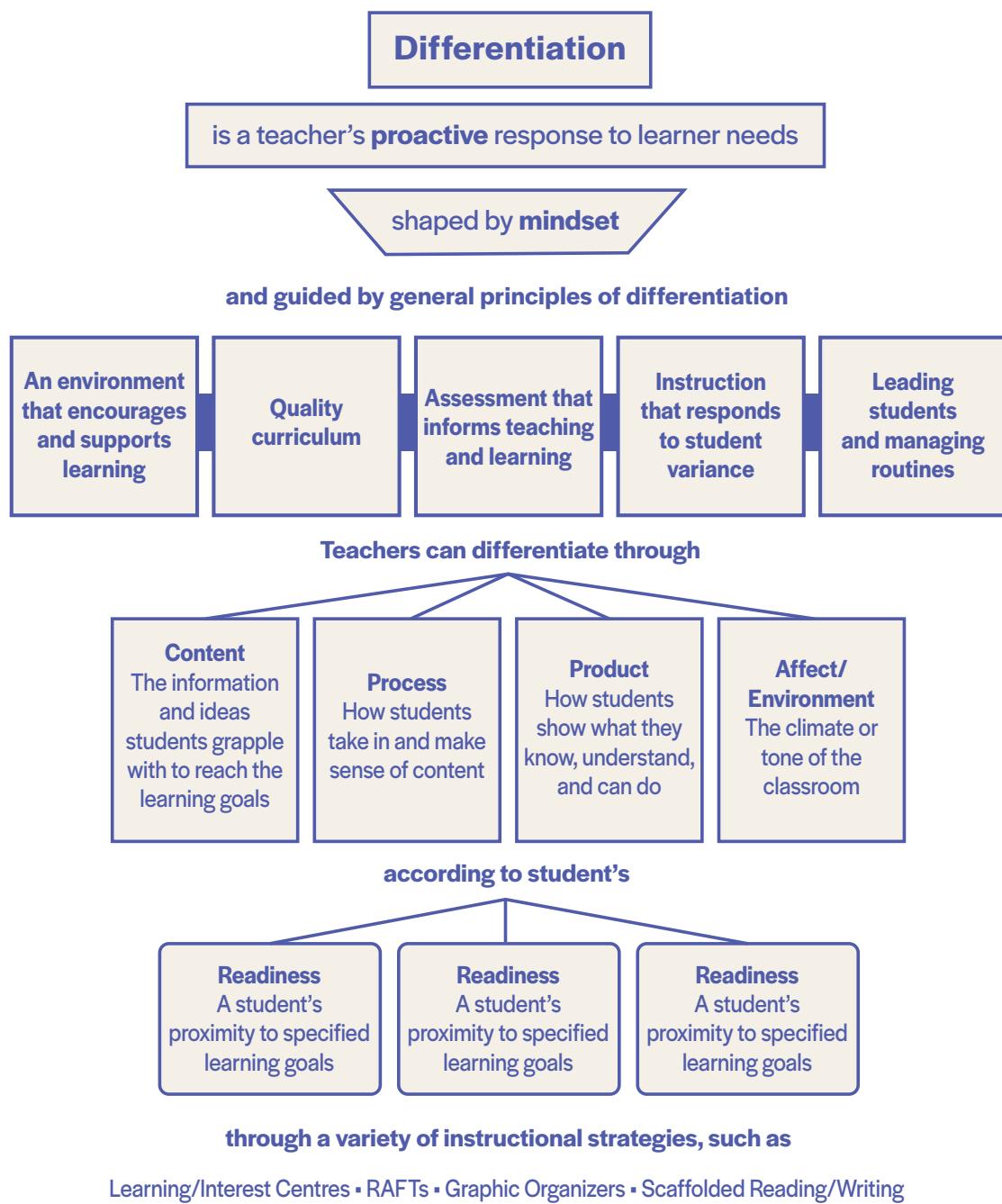
Simply put, differentiation means the teacher acknowledges that all learners are individuals, who learn in different ways. It is about using varied approaches and strategies with our learners so that they can make the greatest progress in their learning. Differentiating effectively is not always easy or straightforward but is a core element of inclusive pedagogy. Practitioners must do different things to help children and young people learn. Differentiation is vital so that the learning maintains an appropriate level of pace and challenge where every learner is included, enthused and meets the highest expectations of progress in learning.

Children and young people have many ‘differences’, not just levels of ability – culture, social background, interests, stages of language acquisition, motivation levels, physical needs etc. A key technique teachers can use to effectively differentiate is to get to know their learners well and what they need. Differentiation should be part of daily practice and is often viewed as time-consuming (different worksheets for different learners). This is a common misconception as differentiation should be more subtle, flexible and responsive to each individual learner.



⁶ Cowley, S (2018) 'The Ultimate Guide to Differentiation: Achieving Excellence for All'

Tomlinson & Moon (2013) define the key elements of differentiation in the concept map below:



“ At its most basic level, differentiating instruction means ‘shaking up’ what goes on in the classroom so that learners have multiple options for taking in information, making sense of ideas and expressing what they learn. In other words, a differentiated classroom provides different avenues to acquiring content, to processing or making sense of ideas, and to developing products so that each student can learn effectively. ” (Tomlinson, 2017)⁷

⁷ Tomlinson, C.A, Moon, C.R (2013) 'Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom'

Effective Feedback

“Feedback is arguably the most critical and powerful aspect of teaching and learning.” (Hattie & Clarke, 2019)⁸



It is information given to the learner about their performance relative to learning intentions or outcomes and should aim towards improvements in learning. Giving or receiving feedback is regarded as the key to moving learning forward and knowing your impact as a teacher.

The impact of feedback can either be positive or negative. Some research studies highlight the positive impact of effective feedback on learners' progress (Effect size 0.74, Hattie). Feedback can be verbal or written, it can come from a teacher or someone taking a teaching role or from peers. However, feedback can also have negative effects on learning. It is important to understand the potential benefits and limitations of feedback as a teaching and learning approach as it is among the most variable of influences.

Elements of Effective Feedback

Fisher and Frey (2009)⁹ suggest there are two vital elements of feedback:

- **Learners' successes are identified**
- **Learners are clear about next steps in their learning journey**

They believe that an effective feedback system is a three step process:

Feed Up: Clarifying the goal – Where am I going? (Learning Intentions/Success Criteria)

The first component of an effective feedback system involves establishing a clear purpose. When learners understand the ultimate goal they are more likely to focus on the learning at hand.

Feed Back: Respond to Student Work – How am I going? (Feedback relative to Success Criteria)

The responses we give to learners about their work is the second component of a good feedback system – this is the one that is most commonly recognised and

should directly link to the learning intention. The most effective feedback gives information about progress or lack of it, towards the learning intention and suggests actions learners can take to close the gap between their gap and the desired goal.

Feed Forward: Modify Instruction – Where to next? (Enhanced challenges and more self-regulation)

In an effective feedback system teachers use assessment data to plan for future instruction; hence the term feed forward. However this is the part that is often overlooked. Planning in this reflective way requires greater flexibility in lesson planning to be truly responsive to the needs of the learners.

Key features of Effective Feedback

- Begin with understanding clear and specific goals (Learning Intentions)
- Based on a set of clear and measurable Success Criteria
- Clearly states areas of strength and next steps; refers to progress rather than ability
- Avoid comparisons that do not offer growth
- Age and stage appropriate
- Involves quality dialogue and / or written comments
- Appropriately timed and based on observation of learning
- Time/opportunity to allow learners to reflect and act upon feedback

“Assessment is feedback to you about your impact; with whom, about what and to what degree.” (Hattie, 2019)¹⁰

^{8,10} Hattie, J & Clarke, S (2018) 'Visible Learning: Feedback'

⁹ Fisher, D & Frey, N (2009) 'Feed Up, Back, Forward' Educational Leadership Vol 67

Effective Questioning

“Teaching is the art of asking questions.
(Socrates)”

A good questioning climate focuses on the development of learning rather than testing recall and is one that activates understanding and a deeper level of thinking. Combined with varied teaching approaches, our children and young people should be exposed to a range of experiences that promote active learning by making them think of and ask questions. Effective use of questioning is a pedagogical skill that teachers must perfect.

Key questions must be planned in advance to ensure that teachers are able to scaffold the learning taking place, and support and extend learners' understanding, depending on their needs and levels of progress. Questions should be targeted and differentiated if they are to develop each learner.

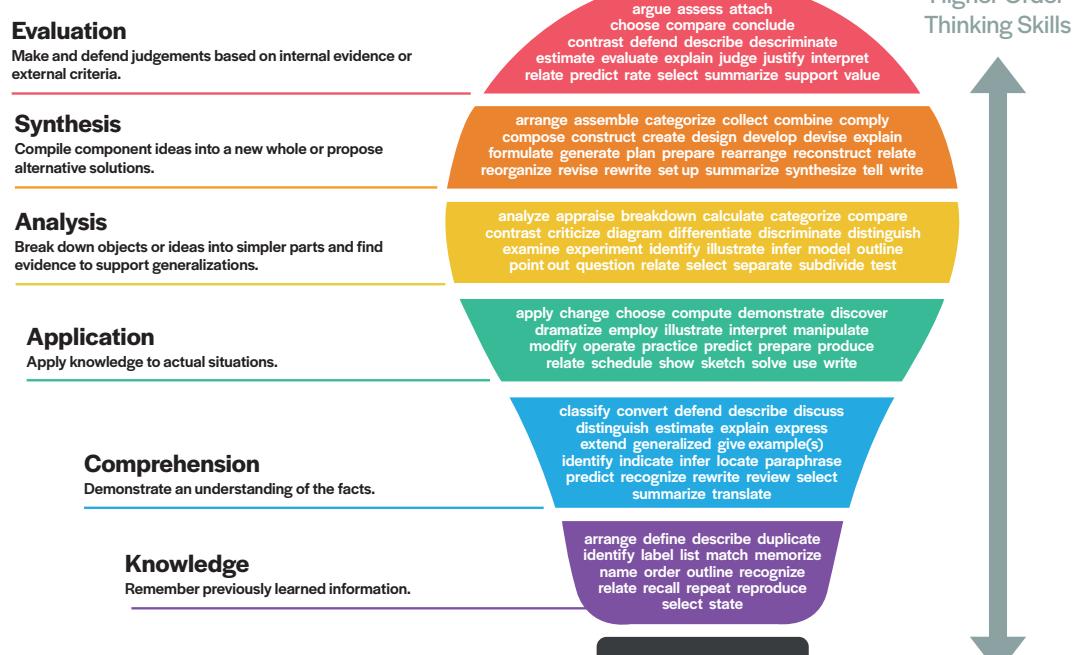
Closed questions suggest that the teacher has a predetermined response in mind and usually relate to recall of facts. Open questions allow for a variety of responses and should promote thinking that is beyond literal. Open, higher order questions should be used

where possible in order to develop children and young people's thinking and understanding. Sufficient wait time must be given in order to ensure that learners have sufficient time to process the question and formulate a response. Probing questions can be used to elicit more detail, allow the learner to clarify their answer and to clear up any misunderstandings.

Some examples are: Why do you think this is the case? What do you think would happen if...? How did you determine...? How did you conclude...? What is the relationship between... and...?

“Indeed, sharing high quality questions may be the most significant thing we can do to improve the quality of student learning.” (Wiliam 2011)¹¹

The most well-known questioning framework is Bloom's taxonomy (1956),¹² later revised by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001).¹³ In the six-level hierarchy, lower-order questions gauge comprehension, medium-level gauge knowledge application, and higher-order questioning elicits synthesis, analysis and evaluation. For example:¹⁴



¹¹ Wiliam, D (2011) 'Embedded Formative Assessment'

¹² Bloom, B (1956) 'Taxonomy of Educational Objectives'

¹³ Anderson L.W & Krathwohl, D (2001) 'A Taxonomy for Teaching, Learning and Assessment'

¹⁴ 'Bloom's Taxonomy Verbs' Fractus Learning is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Bloom found that over 95% of the test questions students encounter required them to think only at the lowest possible level; the recall of knowledge. This taxonomy helps practitioners pose questions in such a way to determine the level of understanding that a learner has. For example, based upon the type of question asked, a teacher can determine that a learner is competent in content knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and/or evaluation. It is organised in a hierachal way to classify information from basic factual recall to higher order thinking. Although

displayed as hierarchical, it is critical that practitioners understand that this does not preclude younger learners from accessing evaluative questions simply because they 'are at a different level in the pyramid'!

There are many ways to actively develop the skills of learners in their understanding of what makes a 'high order' question. At an appropriate stage in their learning, learners should be supported to generate their own questions and have a clear understanding of which category these questions would sit under and why.

The use of varied question types and associated strategies will promote learning and provide robust formative assessment information. Some examples are given below:

Question Types	Questioning Strategies
Closed Open Hinge point Student-generated Scaffolded Socratic method Divergent	Extended wait time Talking Partners No Hands Up Mind Mapping Continuing the question Take a Break If this is the answer...what is the question?

High quality questions lead to high quality talk and teachers should be clear that effective questioning is key to developing thinking and assessment for learning in the classroom.

“ To question well is to teach well. ”
(Sachs, 1954)¹⁵

¹⁵ Sachs, E (1954) 'The Prerequisites of Good Teaching'

Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning



“Too often, we teach students what to think but not how to think.”
(OECD Insights)¹⁶

Metacognition is a critically important, yet often overlooked component of learning. There are various definitions relating to metacognition and it has posed some difficulty when trying to describe what metacognition means in the classroom. On a basic level, and defined by John Flavell's (1979)¹⁷ work it is '*thinking about thinking*'. Effective metacognition strategies get learners to think about their own learning more explicitly, usually by teaching them to set goals and monitor and evaluate their own progress.

As detailed in the Guidance Report (2019)¹⁸ produced by the Education Endowment Foundation, self-regulated learning can be broken into three components that teachers need to know about to help their learners to develop into successful learners:

Cognition: The mental process involved in knowing, understanding and learning. Strategies include memorisation techniques or subject specific strategies. Cognitive strategies are fundamental to acquiring knowledge and completing learning tasks.

Metacognition: The ways learners monitor and direct their learning. For example, having decided that a particular cognitive strategy for memorisation is likely to be successful, a learner then monitors whether it has indeed been successful and then deliberately changes (or not) their memorisation method based on that evidence. Metacognitive strategies are used to monitor and control our thought processes – selecting the most appropriate strategy for the task being undertaken.

Motivation: A learner's willingness to engage their metacognitive and cognitive skills and apply them to their learning. Motivational strategies will include a learner convincing themselves to undertake a tricky revision task now as a way of improving their future learning.

It is impossible to be metacognitive without having different cognitive strategies to hand and possessing the motivation and perseverance to tackle problems and apply these strategies.

Metacognitive knowledge of strategies and tasks, as well as self-knowledge, is linked to how learners learn and perform in the classroom. (Pintrich, 2002)¹⁹

It can enable learners to:

- be flexible in their approaches;
- have the ability to assess which strategy is most effective;
- see that learning is a process, one they can input into, be at the centre of an activity, directing it;
- take control of own learning and be responsible for their own success.

A child or young person can become a self-regulated i.e. metacognitive learner by understanding that their ability to learn is a skill that can develop over time and is not a fixed quantity. When learners improve their metacognitive skills they are more likely to learn from their mistakes; embracing a '*Growth Mindset*'. Learners also benefit from setting themselves reasonable learning goals and have the belief in their ability (self-efficacy) to choose and use productive learning and self-monitoring strategies. (Lovett, 2008)²⁰

“Metacognition lies at the root of all learning...self-knowledge, awareness of how and why we think as we do, and the ability to adapt and learn, are critical to our survival as individuals.”
(Zull, 2011)²¹

¹⁶ OECD (2014) 'Want to improve your problem solving skills? Try metacognition'

¹⁷ Flavell, J (1979) 'Metacognition and Cognitive Monitoring'

¹⁸ Education Endowment Foundation (2019) 'Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning'

¹⁹ Pintrich, P (2002) 'The Role of Metacognitive Knowledge in Learning, Teaching and Assessing'

²⁰ Lovett, MC (2008) 'Teaching Metacognition- Understanding and overcoming hate'

²¹ Zull, J (2011) 'From Brain to Mind- Using Neuroscience to guide change in Education'

Collaboration

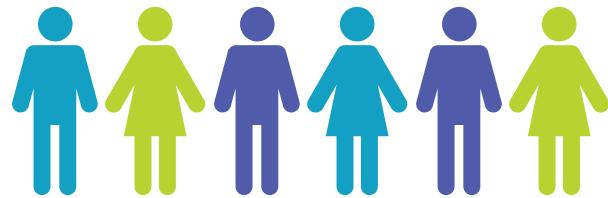
“...a good education is about building character, providing moral purpose, encouraging creativity and collaborative problem solving. We need to make space and time for people to learn in new ways – collaboratively, in the real world.” (Leadbeater, 2016)²²

There is plentiful research affirming the benefits of a collaborative learning culture on school improvement and learner achievement but questions still remain as to what a genuine collaborative learning culture looks like and if we have this culture within our establishments.

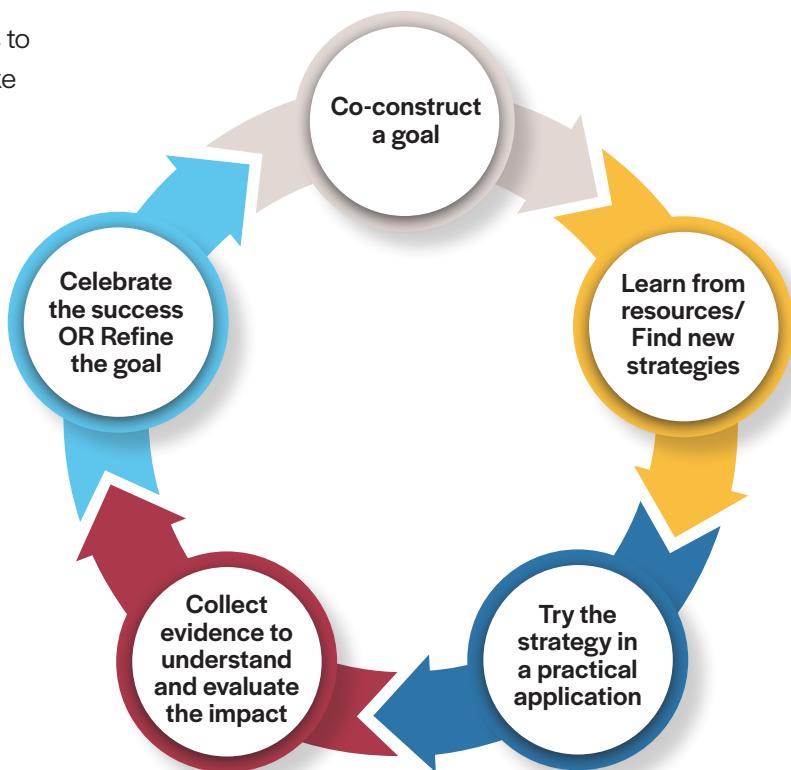
Within ‘Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools’ (Bergeson 2007)²³ identifies high levels of collaboration and communication as a key characteristic. Collaboration is defined by the West Partnership as something that involves working together to understand and improve pedagogy for agreed purposes, which leads to better outcomes, informed by evidence and critical self-reflection.

Collaborative learning should not be viewed as a process, practice or innovation but as a fundamental feature of the culture of a playroom, classroom, department, school, cluster or system. Developing a collaborative culture requires knowledge, skills and persistence by all involved. (Ontario 2013-14)

Hattie’s research on what works best in education identifies **Collective Teacher Efficacy** as having the biggest influence on student achievement with an effect size of 1.57. He highlights the importance of leaders establishing a school climate that fosters an increased sense of teacher efficacy so that they can build collective efficacy as a staff. This is defined as their belief in the collective capability of the group to positively influence outcomes for learners, including those who are disengaged and/or disadvantaged.



DeWitt (2018) created the cycle below to support leaders in building a collaborative culture with collective teacher efficacy. Of paramount importance is that staff understand their purpose as without this they may take little or no ownership of what they are trying to achieve.



Adapted from Knight (2007), Donohoo (2013) and DeWitt (2018)²⁴

²² Leadbeater, C (2016) ‘The Problem Solvers’

²³ Bergeson, T (2007) ‘The Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools’

²⁴ DeWitt (2019) ‘How Collective Teacher Efficacy Develops’

Collaborative Learning in the playroom or classroom can be defined as when children or young people work together on a learning activity that requires:

- clearly perceived positive interdependence - a sense of sink or swim together
- clearly perceived individual accountability and responsibility to achieve the group's goal – everyone has to contribute
- frequent use of interpersonal skills – communication, trust, leadership, decision making, conflict resolution
- frequent and regular group processing reflecting on how well the group is doing and how they might improve

In order to be most effective, the collaboration must be genuine, and not simply learners working alongside each other relatively independent and occasionally sharing answers. Putting learners into a group does not necessarily gain a collaborative relationship; it has to be structured and led well by the teacher.

Children and young people's learning is at its optimum when they have opportunities to learn with and from each other and are shown how to do this effectively. Vygotsky defines learning as a 'social process' where social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. Learners should have increasing opportunities to work in teams, on activities or projects that are responsive to their interests, bringing together different knowledge and skills. Approaches which promote talk and interaction between learners can result in the best gains.

“The most valuable resource that all teachers have is each other. Without collaboration our growth is limited to our own perspectives. JJ (Meehan 2015)²⁵

²⁵ Meehan, RJ (2015) 'A Teacher's Treasures, Bounty for All'

Motivation and Engagement

“I am neither clever nor especially gifted. I am only very, very curious.”
(Einstein)

Getting learners genuinely motivated to learn requires practitioners tapping into their natural curiosity. Without motivation and engagement, teaching and learning is futile. Children and young people don't often get much enjoyment out of a task that they are not motivated by or engaged in.

Motivation is often described as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to behaviour that is driven by internal rewards. For example, intrinsically motivated children may find the subject naturally fascinating or may feel a sense of achievement as they work towards a goal. In contrast, extrinsically motivated children may engage in a task or activity in order to earn external rewards or avoid punishment.

Intrinsic motivation can be more difficult to instil in learners but it leads to high-quality learning and creativity whereas extrinsic motivation can lead to short term gains but fail to develop a lifelong love of learning.

“Engagement is essential if children and young people are to become more independent in their learning, develop the confidence and courage to give themselves and each other quality feedback and rise to the challenge of stretching themselves to the limit.”
(Griffiths and Burns, 2012)²⁶



Csikszentmihalyi (1990)²⁷ is noted for his work in the study of happiness and creativity, in particular, his research around optimal performance and the notion of 'flow' – when people are 'lost' in the activity and time 'disappears'. His studies show that for school-age children there is far too little *flow* during their school day.

Griffiths and Burns (2012)²⁶ have found through their research and observations that *flow* rarely occurs without the following six features in place:

- 1 Tasks are appropriately challenging
- 2 Teacher input is minimal
- 3 Class have the necessary learning skills
- 4 Goals are clear and worthwhile
- 5 Feedback is immediate
- 6 Tasks are intrinsically motivating.

With this in mind, all practitioners should strive to get all learners engaged and motivated by tapping into their natural curiosity and design creative and innovative learning experiences. This does require some thought and planning from practitioners and comes from knowing their learners well. The use of effective questioning can also create intrigue and provoke curiosity because they allow for learners to have their own perspective which requires justification.

²⁶ Burns, M & Griffiths, A (2012) 'Outstanding Teaching: Engaging Learners'

²⁷ Csikszentmihalyi, M (1990) 'Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience'

One of the challenges practitioners face is developing a culture where learners feel empowered to ask questions, discuss misconceptions and challenge what they hear. Learners' contributions should be valued; this can be key to engagement. A culture in the classroom or playroom that develops motivation and engagement is described by Alan McLean as a 'sunny' or 'motivating' classroom.²⁸ They have the following features:

- high support and high challenge
- autonomy within structure
- learners are trusted and made accountable
- creativity and humour are evident
- encouragement and meaningful praise is evident
- students feel valued and they take responsibility for their own learning and behaviour
- the focus is on self-improvement

“Curiosity has a skilful aspect, certainly, but it also involves a deeper pleasure in making discoveries and an openness to novelty and challenge. To develop such inclinations, students need ongoing opportunities, encouragement and guidance in a wide range of contexts.”
(Claxton, Costa and Kallick 2015)²⁹

²⁸ McLean, A (2003) *'The Motivated School'*

²⁹ Claxton, G, Costa, A & Kallick, B (2016) *'Hard thinking about Soft Skills'*, Vol 73, www.Learningpersonalized.com

Conclusion

Whilst this guidance should assist schools in improving the quality and consistency of learning, teaching and assessment, it should by no means constrain practitioners. All staff must be empowered and encouraged to be innovative and creative in the learning and teaching approaches that they employ. They must display individuality and responsiveness and ensure that their practice is underpinned by sound theoretical knowledge and research. We support and challenge all those who work in the education service in East Renfrewshire to ensure that excellent experiences are consistently provided in order to realise our ambition of excellent outcomes for all.

