

4. How do we enact curriculum?

Curriculum making – the development of practices, processes and policies – happens across different parts of the education system. **Place based** curriculum making which happens, for example, in early learning and community learning settings and schools involves work such as curriculum design and the development of **pedagogical practices**.

Language Matters (2024)

Once questions of why, and what have been considered, educators can move on to questions of enactment: how do we do it?

This section relates to the enactment of the updated curriculum from August 2028 onwards and live co-design is ongoing.

This section uses the existing 5 parts of ‘The How’ of Scotland’s approach to curriculum-making to support ongoing and periodic activity in schools and settings.

- Understanding our learners and our communities
- Knowing the big ideas
- Being clear on the practical approaches
- Using meaningful learning networks
- Knowing your own learning and support needs.

Under ‘Being clear on the practical approaches’, significant work is currently underway to support educators in pedagogy and assessment. This includes

practical tools to support and inform planning and day-to-day practice.

These will be explored as part of the professional learning offer and feedback loop from September to November 2026.

Education Scotland and Qualifications Scotland are working in partnership to ensure alignment between broad general education and senior phase.

For the remaining parts of curriculum making, initial contributions are shared here and will also be explored during the feedback loop.

Professional learning activities will be created for this section to support activity in schools and settings from session 2027/28 onwards.

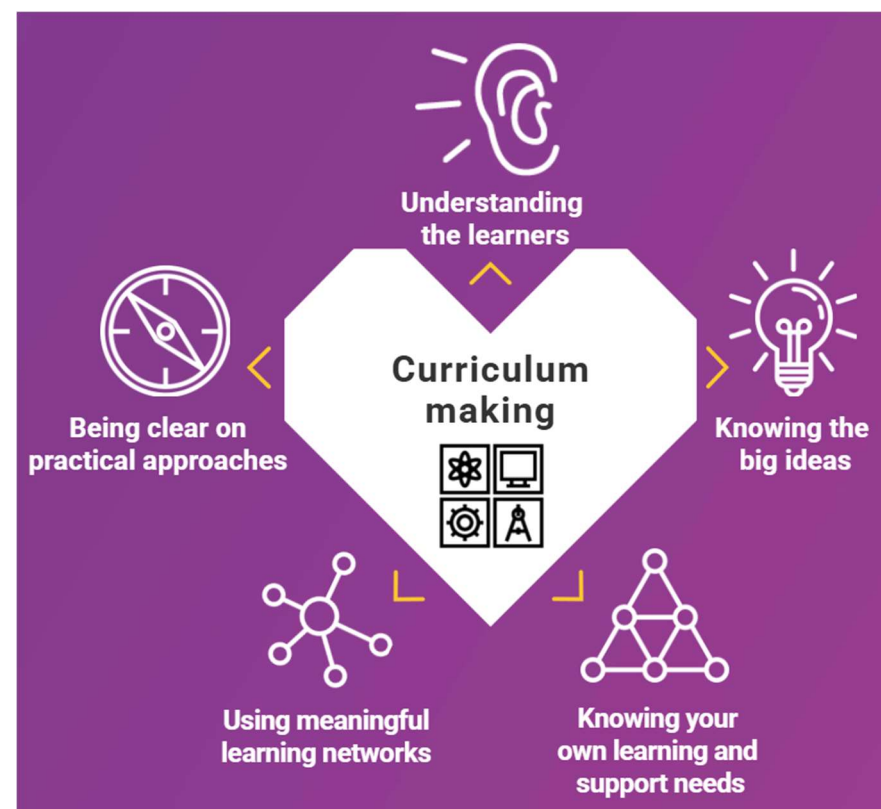
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Curriculum making is far more than a framework or set of documents, it is a ‘multilayered social practice’ taking place across multiple sites (Priestley et al., 2021).

Site of Activity	Examples of activity	Examples of actors
Supra	Transnational curricular discourse generation, policy borrowing and learning, policy lending	OECD, World Bank, UNESCO, EU, Council of Europe
Macro	Development of curriculum policy frameworks; legislation to establish agency and infrastructure	National governments, curriculum agencies
Meso	Production of guidance, leadership of and support for curriculum making; production of resources	National governments, curriculum agencies, district authorities... subject-area counsellors
Micro	School-level curriculum making; programme design, lesson planning	Principals, senior leaders; middle leaders; teachers
Nano	Curriculum-making in classrooms and other learning spaces, pedagogic interactions, curriculum events	Teachers; students

Adapted from Priestley et al. (2021) p. 13.

Using these definitions, this guidance, and the Big Ideas KDU model, are examples of macro/meso layer documents, co-created with the profession, to provide tools to support teachers and practitioners with curriculum-making at the micro and nano-layers.



4.1 Understanding our learners and our communities

The 3-18 curriculum learning journey is most effective when it is understood as a shared responsibility across a networked learning system, often known as a cluster or associated schools' group, which includes educators, families, communities and partners.

This section prompts educators to start their curriculum work by thinking about:

- How children and young people develop from birth to 18 and beyond
- The contributions of communities and places

As such, it is helpful for all educators to understand the stages coming before and after the developmental level of the children for whom they are designing curriculum experiences.

4.1.1 How children and young people grow and develop

In Scotland, much has been learned through the national commitment to *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)*, which has firmly established a shared language, values, and practice framework across services supporting children and young people. This approach has strengthened collaboration, emphasised early intervention, and reinforced the importance of placing the child at the centre of decision-making.

However, improving outcomes requires ongoing reflection and renewal. A continued and intentional focus on understanding who our children and young people are, their identities, experiences, rights, and diverse needs, will be critical to sustaining progress and

ensuring we continue to truly “get it right” for every child and young person across Scotland.

Child development is shaped by the interaction between biological factors (including genetics and neurodevelopment), a child or young person’s environment, and the experiences available to them.

Children and young people with additional support needs may show differences in the pace, sequence, and pattern of development, including wider developmental delays.

The following outline of child development draws on two sources:

- The existing text in *Realising the Ambition: Being Me* for babies, toddlers and young children is reproduced here
- Additional text to include middle childhood, adolescence and young adulthood has been created by a sub-group of the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists (ASPEP).

It is important to note that all children and young people develop at their own pace and while some will be able to exhibit these developmental competencies earlier, other may be later and some will not progress through these stages. There will also be significant variation between individuals as they grow and develop.

Note: when this draft becomes a live, digital resource, the following text will be “chunked” into relevant sections to improve accessibility, and displayed via a menu.

Babies – [Realising the Ambition p19](#)

From birth, babies know how they like to be held, be comforted and who they like to be with. They have already gained a range of skills learned in the womb. These skills help a new-born baby make secure attachments and reciprocal relationships with their caregivers. Babies are making active choices, even at this early age, and are deciding how they prefer their world to be. They want and need to make relationships with the people around them. Babies thrive when they experience relationships which are warm, secure, consistent, loving and responsive.

Learning while being carefully nurtured suggests an emotional response and commitment to the child. Babies are eager and keen to make sense of their world around them. They have an innate power or drive to develop and revise their thinking processes. The more practice a baby gets in recognising similarities and patterns in the world around them, the more competent they will become as brain connections increase quickly as they begin to make sense of their world.

They learn through using their senses, being active and mobile, through inquiry, communicating in a variety of ways, discovering new things and interacting with others. Babies do this by practising their skills over and over again, returning to previous connections in order to make sense of their world

Toddlers – [Realising the Ambition p20](#)

When the baby starts to be mobile their world changes and the desire for independence increases. Toddlers become more involved in doing things for themselves; they have a very strong drive to

repeat actions, move things from one place to another, they cover things up, put things into containers, move in circles and throw things. These actions can be observed frequently through their play. This learning through these repeated actions and engagement can be described as a form of schematic play.

The toddler still enjoys familiar routines and experiences. Having these routines gives them the confidence to explore further and take risks. Toddlers will often become frustrated where they have problems vocalising their feelings and this may lead to some challenging phases.

Caring for children at this stage requires sensitivity and understanding to the child's conflicting needs to balance independence, risk, reassurance and support.

Young Children – [Realising the Ambition p21](#)

As children get older they become more independent and sociable. They need to be active both physically and mentally as they have a growing capacity to think, inquire and communicate. They enjoy conversations and have a rapidly growing vocabulary.

They often show more perseverance in their play and concentrate on experiences which are interesting and personally meaningful. As the young child develops and learns they may continue to engage in schematic play, often integrating and coordinating schemas by exploring more than one at a time. The coordination and connection of schemas lead to higher-order concepts, and refine the child's skills, leading to consolidation of their learning through opportunities to develop and apply them in familiar and new situations. Their

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schematic play may become more sophisticated and educators will observe a wider range of skills being developed that link crucially to early literacy and numeracy. For example, moving on from filling and emptying to using materials to, match and sort, order by size, count one for one and recognise the number of objects in a group without counting them (subitise), exploring volume and capacity and concepts such as full/empty and heavy/light.

A developed interest in rotation and trajectory can lead to mark making as the young child makes circular patterns using their fingers with paint and begins to make horizontal and vertical marks representing their drawings and 'writing'. The defining feature of being a young active learner is the need to widen experiences and learning in all areas of development. The important role for the practitioner is to determine what the young child could learn through their own interests, balanced with learning across the areas of the curriculum. Supporting this in a quality learning environment with high quality interactions will enable the young child to support and extend their learning, deepen thinking and make progress.



Middle Childhood – Broadly between the ages of 6 to 12 years

In middle childhood there is significant growth in children's executive function skills. Executive function during these years involves a set of skills and processes that can help children with everyday tasks including:

- Organising;
- Planning;
- Problem Solving;
- Focusing Attention; and
- Emotional Regulation.

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Generally, at this stage children are more able to focus on tasks and follow multi-step instructions. This typically improves as they progress through middle childhood. Such planning and organisational skills allows children to become more independent in daily functioning. For example, this might involve taking on a class 'job' by keeping track of their belongings, gathering materials for an activity and completing self-care tasks like getting changed for physical education.

Children have more control over their thoughts, feelings, actions and behaviour. Self-regulation, that is a child's ability to manage their own stress, feelings and behaviour, and executive functioning throughout middle childhood, are supported through the co-regulatory support, guidance, teaching and modelling provided by the adults (and peers) around them. When children are stressed, they will be less able to evidence these skills and may require adult or peer support to do so. Their ability to be able to pause and think before acting, and to have more rational reactions to emotional moments or challenge, all develop further during this period.

In middle childhood, children's articulation of speech develops and their sentences become more complex. Their vocabulary continues to expand, and they become more able to organise spoken and written information logically. Children's word use becomes more varied. For example, they can use more specific descriptive words like gigantic, huge, massive, to describe a concept that they may previously have described in more simplistic terms like 'big'. This, in turn, can impact on their spoken and written language, meaning that their stories and narratives become more elaborate and complex.

At this stage, we can also see advancements in the use of social language & communication. This impacts on children's play and interactions with others. For example, children develop more understanding of conversational conventions, like turn-taking and maintaining a conversation. They are able to use language for a variety of different purposes for example., greetings, endings, requests, commands and they are more proficient in adapting their speech style depending on their audience. This developmental growth also allows children to gossip, joke, tease, and engage in 'banter' in the shape of verbal battles and in turn supports shifts in how they play and socialise.

Middle childhood is a time where children are very much developing their social understanding and learning both about themselves in relation to social groups and how these groups work. Children are very much involved with social rules, perspective taking, competing with peers and negotiating social conflicts. Friendship groups and close friendships become more important to children during these years. Acquiring the ability to adapt to 'the rules' in a variety of social contexts is an element of this developmental stage. Social competences during these years include the ability to cooperate, be assertive, show empathy, more independently manage their emotions and take on responsibility successfully.

Moral understanding and reasoning is also developing further, with children increasingly able to understand conflicting views and perspectives.

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Adolescence – Roughly between the ages of 10/12 and 20

The term adolescence is generally used to describe a transition stage between childhood and adulthood. Adolescence can also refer to both teenage years and puberty, as these terms are not mutually exclusive. Adolescence is one of the most dynamic events of human growth and development, second only to infancy in terms of the rate of developmental changes that can occur. Its start and end varies by person. Children's transition to secondary education often coincides with the onset of adolescence and the changes that this brings.

During adolescence, connections in the brain strengthen and allows for increased multitasking, enhanced ability to solve problems, and the capability to process complex information. This also allows for the capacity to more deeply engage with meta-cognition (thinking about thinking or about our own emotional responses). In this way adolescents can become increasingly able to self-evaluate and analyse as they progress through adolescence.

It has been established that, around the age of 12 years, adolescents decrease their reliance on concrete thinking and begin to show increased capacity for abstract thinking, visualisation of potential outcomes, and develop a more complex and logical understanding of cause and effect. There is continued development in areas such as working memory where young people now show increased ability to manage complex and abstract, multi-part tasks and are better able to integrate learning across curricular areas and connect up more complex experiences.

Adolescents' metacognitive skills increasingly progress meaning that they are able to reflect more on their own learning, think about the strategies they have used and consider how they might improve a task. We also see developments in strategic planning and organisational skills meaning that young people can become more proficient in prioritising tasks, planning how to study and evaluating study methods, for example, as they move through adolescence.

Experiences at this age and stage can elicit deep feelings and this sensitive period of brain development provides an opportunity to develop specific skills and lifelong interests.

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By the age of 15, there is little difference in adolescents' and adults' decision-making patterns for hypothetical situations. However, in real-life situations adolescents are much more influenced by their context and tend not to apply this decision-making skill as maturely as adults.

The vocabulary and conversational skills of young people continue to progress throughout adolescence with children having better use and understanding of figurative language such as sarcasm, idioms, metaphors and abstract concepts such as equity and justice. Peer influence and self-identity are often considered prevalent features at this stage of development where language is adapted and modified to fit in with groups or as an expression of self-identity, the use of slang being an example of this.

Adolescence is a stage where young people further develop their sense of who they are, their identity, what they believe, and how and where they fit with others. At this time adolescents are exploring what makes them 'them', including racial, ethnic and sexual identities. Adults have a key role in affirming pride in adolescents' sense of identity, which impacts on wellbeing.

Adolescents also have an increased need to explore and experience novelty. Risk taking is often a feature of early and mid-adolescence. Most risk taking at this age and stage does not occur in isolation; critically, it happens in the presence of peers. Adolescents are likely to respond better to learning that focusses on the immediate social consequences of their actions. They benefit from experiences that allow them to take risks in the right situations and in the right contexts, such as in their learning or to broaden their social circle, or to perform in front of an audience, for example. Adolescents who

tend to engage in risky behaviours in relatively safe environments, develop the confidence and competence to tackle more complex situations.

While adults still have an important role in the lives of adolescents, starting in early adolescence the increasing influence of peers is also a hallmark of this stage of human development, in our society. Fitting in and peer acceptance is important to adolescents. and peers hold more weight than the opinion of important adults. They can also become more sensitive to peer opinions and hyper-sensitive to rejection in the form of social exclusion. Fear of such social exclusion can then drive adolescent decision making – social factors often have a higher weighting in adolescent decision making than in adults. This can be both a risk or a protective factor, depending on the peers and the context. Schools and settings can harness these peer effects when intentionally cultivating connection and pro-social norms and behaviours, as peers can influence others by 'setting the tone.' The need for social connection, can be a risk or a protective factor depending on the context. It can lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour or conversely an increase in pro-social behaviours such as activism and volunteering.

Adolescents tend to care deeply about what others think of them and have a growing awareness of comparison and judgement from others. Adolescents can experience a heightened sense of both self-consciousness and a heightened sense of embarrassment.

Development at this stage also means that adolescents can contribute more meaningfully to their social groups and community. This can provide a sense of purpose. Developmentally appropriate

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opportunities to contribute and develop a sense of purpose are important within educational settings.

The values, expectations, and behaviours that adolescents encounter in their immediate social circles and the broader culture can either support or hinder healthy development. The social norms can dictate what is considered appropriate behaviour, what goals are deemed important, and how adolescents are expected to navigate challenges and opportunities they face. In this way schools and settings can provide a crucial context.

Late Adolescence and the Transition to early adulthood from 18 onwards

The point at which an adolescent becomes an adult will vary from person to person. Adolescents continue to develop their cognitive reasoning, executive functioning skills and self-regulation abilities as they transition to early adulthood. It is not too late to intervene to improve educational outcomes, for those who have had a challenging childhood and/or adolescence.

While there is a tendency to see the greater advancements in language and communication skills at earlier stages in development, language progression in adulthood is often a period where there is further refinement, mastery and more specialised use of language. Adults can become more attuned to and skilled in adapting language and delivery dependent on context, for example using professional language at work and more causal language and tone with peers. Adults that pursue further or higher education or are within specific places of work may also start to use more specialised language

based on subjects they are learning or the context they are working within.

Through experience, opportunities and practice many adults will continue to refine their language and communication skills leading to a more proficient use of language and increased fluency in speech. This is evident in the refinement of advanced communication skills for example, in negotiation, persuasion and public speaking.

During this stage, progression in long term planning, goal setting and organisational skills are often made. These in turn can help young adults navigate their transition into life beyond school education. The capacity to be able to switch between thinking about different concepts or simultaneously thinking about multiple ideas or concepts develops throughout adulthood, along with working memory, helping young adults to more effectively manage new environments, experiences and more complex life challenges.

Executive functioning can become more reliably integrated with self-regulation, meaning that these developments support young adults' ability to both navigate and manage more complex social situations and help sustain relationships, all the while managing their own emotional responses. Young adults generally become less impulsive and less emotional decision makers.

Further development of the capacities related to metacognition can lead to an individual having a better knowledge and understanding of self, and their own capabilities, strengths and limits. This can help them, with guidance, to make more informed decisions about work, life and/or further and higher education. Early adulthood brings an increasing sense of independence where individuals become more

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pro-active and set personal goals based on their own insight and understanding of who they are, who they want to be and what they want to achieve. At this stage, we generally see an increase in the ability to put the knowledge acquired through their education into action to achieve real life goals.

Provocations and professional learning activities:

These will be available in 2027/28.

4.1.2 Place-based curriculum – the contribution of communities and places

Scotland's curriculum offers the flexibility to respond to the needs of each unique setting, such as geographical area, school size and the particular opportunities or needs within a local community.

It is incumbent upon educators to understand what makes their own school and setting unique. This understanding will ensure the curriculum is relevant and inclusive to the diverse needs the children and young people in the community it serves.

Community Learning and Development (CLD) partners play a strong role in curriculum making that is connected to assets, needs, questions and partners in the local community.

When we consider curriculum design and development alongside the context of the lived experience of the children and young people in the communities we serve, we can create meaning and relevance that not only inspires engagement and participation, but also leads to improved outcomes in attendance and achievement.

In accordance with the aspiration outlined above, in section 3.6 above, teachers and practitioners will give consideration to the identities and perspectives represented in the community they are serving, how to be attentive to these in the curriculum, and how to amplify perspectives or identities that are missing.

Place-based curriculum making will build on a secure understanding and knowledge of the assets, resources and needs of the community. It will be typified by joint working, collaborative practices, shared evidence and data.

Professional dialogue / practical activities:

These will be available in session 2027/28.

4.1.3 Considerations for practice

Across the world, learner diversity is the norm rather than the exception.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states:

- Every child has the right to an education (Article 28)
- Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full (Article 29)

All of Scotland's children and young people deserve equal opportunity to thrive and to be recognised and celebrated for their own journey of personal growth. Children and young people bring a range of cultural, linguistic and social assets into the place where they learn.

Responsive practice uses educators' knowledge about children's needs, development and community to inform approaches. It recognises that children of the same chronological age may be at very different stages socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically and that meaningful learning occurs when curriculum making responds and adapts creatively to these differences.

Inclusive curriculum design begins with understanding those needs, strengths, circumstances and entitlements rather than retrospectively adapting once barriers emerge.

The four interconnected factors that give rise to Additional support needs are:

1. Health or disability, for example:

- Ill health
- Hidden and Visible Disabilities
- Sensory impairments (e.g. hearing or vision difficulties).
- Autism, ADHD
- Learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, processing difficulties)
- Physical disabilities requiring adaptations or assistive technology.
- Intellectual disabilities e.g. down syndrome, global delay.
- Mental health challenges (e.g., anxiety, depression, eating disorders).

2. Social and emotional factors, for example:

- Children and young people who have experienced trauma or loss.
- Children and young people experiencing bullying.

3. Family circumstances factors, for example:

- Children with English as an additional language (EAL).
- Children affected by family breakdown, domestic abuse, or parental imprisonment.

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- Young carers balancing school with caring responsibilities.
- Looked after and care experienced children and young people.
- Pupils whose learning is disrupted due to frequent school moves (e.g., Armed Forces families, Traveller families, refugees).

4. Learning environment factors, for example:

- A child's or young person's learning environment can create barriers to learning, achievement, and participation. These barriers may arise from the school ethos and relationships, inflexible curricular arrangements, or teaching approaches that do not accommodate different learning needs.
- Highly able learners needing additional challenge.

This list is provided only for guidance purposes and is **not exhaustive**. A need for additional support does not imply a lack of ability, skills, or strengths. Not all potential circumstances giving rise to additional support needs are listed above and not all children captured by these circumstances will necessarily require additional support.

In considering what this means for curriculum making, educators should:

- Consider how the factors identified affect a child's ability to engage meaningfully with education.

- Adopt a personalised approach to identifying and addressing their needs.
- Ensure the support offered is inclusive and flexible.

Provocations:

Who benefits most from our curriculum?

Who might be unintentionally marginalised?

What makes our learning community unique?

Why are we teaching what we are teaching in the way we are teaching it?

How does it reflect local context and population?

How does it reduce barriers to participation?

How is learner diversity recognised?

How is ambition maintained for all?

How is this reflected in our curriculum rationale?

Professional learning activities:

These will be available in session 2027/28.

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4.2 Knowing the big ideas

Each of the 8 Curriculum Areas is informed by an overarching set of Big Ideas. They provide a rationale for the 'why' and 'what' children and young people learn within a curriculum area. They capture the most important overarching understandings and insights that articulate the way that a curriculum area makes sense of the world, the significance of this learning and the contribution it makes to the development of the four capacities.

It is not envisaged that the Big Ideas will be used in day-to-day planning, but on a more long-term basis by educators to support connections across learning, and to consider how those main overarching insights become more and more visible for children and young people as they progress through the 3-18 learner journey.

They will be a source for professional dialogue and professional learning.

A school or setting's chosen approaches to skills will also feature in a similar way. The most important thing is that children and young people develop an understanding of their developing skills and are able to articulate them.

A school/setting, cluster or local authority skills framework may help with shared language and making the skills and attributes of the four capacities explicit. Scottish Government are working towards a national approach to skills, and the CIC will take account of this in preparation for enacting the updated curriculum from August 2028 onwards.

Scotland's Learner Profile, as part of an agreed approach to profiling, can help children and young people from P5 to senior phase develop

and articulate their own understanding of their journey through the curriculum.

All educators have responsibility for developing children and young people's:

- Mental, emotional, social and physical health
- Communication, language and literacy
- Numeracy

Work is being undertaken to explore updated definitions of these responsibilities, embed them fully in the KDU model and ensure that educators are supported in these responsibilities.

By the January 2027 release of support materials, this work will be fully embedded with clearer, decluttered guidance available for practitioners.

In 2024/25 an exploration of cross-curricular learning was conducted by 500 teachers and practitioners. This included the 3 areas above, as well as:

- Creativity
- Careers & pathways
- Democratic values
- Digital skills
- Entrepreneurship
- Learning for sustainability
- Money and finance
- Social justice, rights and equalities

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The exploration identified the learning that was important and how this needs to be both **embedded** in the curriculum and **explicit** for children and young people. There was a recurring desire expressed to move these themes from being 'bolt-on' single experiences to being planned more coherently across the 3-18 learner journey.

Work is currently being undertaken across the CIC to address these issues.

By the January 2027 release of materials, this work will be fully embedded with clearer, decluttered guidance available for practitioners.

A key part for teachers and practitioners to consider is how to draw these out and make these themes explicit for children and young people as they progress through the 3-18 learner journey.

This could include, for example, choosing topics or resources that use some of these themes to provide an engaging context to bring the curriculum to life. These themes also provide a rich opportunity for interdisciplinary learning.

At school or setting level, leaders and teams could consider what these themes look like across the learner journey. These themes might also support design of universal or targeted programmes of learning in line with robust self-evaluation, e.g. "Preparing for the future" programmes in careers and pathways.

Further tools, resources and networks to support this will be explored over sessions 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Scots Language education provides a rich context for learning in a number of curriculum areas, and is particularly well-suited to cross-curricular and interdisciplinary learning. There are 4 key curricular areas for Scots as part of the CIC refresh: Literacy, Languages, Social Subjects and Expressive Arts. Data and evidence collected directly from teachers over the lifetime of CfE shows that Scots can stand alone within a curricular area, or can be planned for in a coordinated way to include multiple curriculum areas as well as explore cross curricular themes such as Creativity and Equality.



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Scots language communication is lived and experienced by many children and young people, linking directly to their learning about and experience of culture, inclusion, equity, diversity and social justice. These are not abstract ideas and should be planned for and given appropriate consideration as part of the ethos, life and culture of schools to properly reflect and represent Scotland's diverse communities to ensure children feel safe, valued, hopeful and able to participate fully as learners.

Provocations:

How might we engage with the Big Ideas as part of ongoing approaches to curriculum design?

How does our approach to skills help our learners develop an understanding of their skills and the ability to communicate them?

How does our approach to profiling support learners to understand and articulate their growth across the four capacities?

Exploring the cross-curricular podcast series, and resources as developed.

Professional learning and practical activities:

These will be available in session 2027/28.

4.3 Being clear on the practical approaches

Pedagogy is curriculum enacted and manifested in and through the **interactions, experiences** and **spaces** and **times** of teaching, learning and **assessment**.

Language Matters 2024

This section, which will cover pedagogy and assessment is currently live in the co-design process. It will include overarching principles and practice guidance, and this will be aligned with the work on qualifications for the senior phase. Practitioners in co-design groups have expressed excitement about the agreed definition of pedagogy above, and how this will enhance practice.

As an initial step in this section, teams could consider the principles of curriculum design, and how these might be enhanced by the updated curriculum and KDU model.

Consultation and engagement over the coming months will ensure that this section is the best it can be, and educators are invited to contribute to this through the feedback loop.

The curriculum design principles

When we consider the interactions, spaces, experiences and times of teaching to enact curriculum, these considerations should be underpinned by our understanding of the **design principles**:



Breadth requires children and young people should have plentiful opportunities to engage with a wide range of contexts and themes, both within their learning environment and in the community. Cross-cutting themes such as *learning for sustainability*, and *social justice* can often enhance breadth of learning, creating links between different areas of learning

Challenge and enjoyment emphasises the relationship between experiencing the appropriate level of challenge and enjoying learning. Enjoyable learning is learning which is active and appropriately challenging.

Depth extends children and young people's capacity for exploring, thinking deeply and applying their learning are vital. It is important that depth is not achieved at the expense of breadth, nor vice versa - both are essential. Well-planned interdisciplinary learning can often

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provide meaningful opportunities for learners to extend and deepen their understanding

Relevance allows children and young people to identify their own values, culture, experiences or future aspirations in their learning

Personalisation and choice helps to ensure that children and young people's interests, motivations and needs are being responded to and met.

Progression highlights the importance of building on prior learning to further develop knowledge and skills; this means effective collaboration are essential to ensure smooth transitions

Coherence ensures a connected journey and avoids unnecessary repetition. Learning builds and connects over time

Alongside this guidance, ES has developed a new national professional learning programme, *Pedagogy in Practice*, to support practitioners to engage more deeply with pedagogy as curriculum enacted. Drawing on practitioner experience, research evidence and emerging priorities within the CIC, the programme creates time and space for educators to reflect on how learning is shaped through interactions, spaces, experiences and time.

A timescale for further work

In preparation for the phased implementation phase of the CIC, work is ongoing at national level to ensure that assessment is coherent and progressive from 3-18 – this will be especially important across transitions. This work learns from and builds on the extensive work on assessment both nationally and within local authorities.

It includes:

- Reviewing approaches to assessment to ensure they reflect the ambition of a Big Ideas KDU Model 3-18
- Developing processes for quality assurance and moderation in the Broad General Education
- Working in partnership with Qualifications Scotland to develop senior phase curriculum and qualifications
- Developing processes for quality assurance and moderation in the new qualifications (led by Qualifications Scotland)
- Exploring implications for national performance measures
- Working with national and local networks that support approaches to assessment.

This work will be developed over sessions 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Provocations:

How do the principles of curriculum design feature in our work?

How might they be enhanced by the move to the updated KDU model?

What do we find most helpful in developing our approaches to pedagogy and assessment, and are we feeding this into the CIC through the feedback loop?

Professional learning and practical activities:

These will be available in 2027/28.

4.4 Using meaningful learning networks

Curriculum and its subsequent learning is most effective when it is understood as a shared responsibility across a networked learning system, including educators, families, communities and wider partners.

In a learning ecosystem, these relationships are intentional and interconnected, enabling more progressive and inclusive pathways for every child and young person. This type of approach recognises that meaningful learning is shaped by context and by collaboration and that this type of engagement strengthens not only the individual outcomes, but wider societal cohesion.

When schools/settings collaborate deeply and intentionally, they create a collective force that accelerates improvement, strengthens professional practice and ensures better outcomes for every child and young person in Scotland. This is not just beneficial – it is essential for building a future-ready education system grounded in equity, empowerment and shared expertise.

Working together and learning from each other, we ensure that every child and young person in Scotland benefits from a connected, innovative and inclusive education system.

The following statements, developed by a national co-design group that explored the conditions for effective curriculum making in 3-18 clusters and communities, outline the principles and benefits of working collaboratively to design curriculum:

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Adapted from Docherty (2025)

1. Professional expertise is shared, not isolated

Collaborative networks create spaces where educators and partners can connect across boundaries - sharing ideas, evidence-informed practice, and innovations that would be difficult to develop alone. By pooling our strengths, we expand the professional knowledge base available to all children and young people.

2. Improvement is collective, not competitive

A networked system replaces isolation with solidarity. Educators benefit from joint problem-solving and shared accountability, as well as the support of each other. Progress becomes a shared mission: when one community improves, we all benefit.

3. Children experience continuity and coherence in their learning

From 3-18, collaboration ensures that children and young people experience a curriculum that builds progressively on strengths, making transitions smoother. This coherence is especially crucial for closing the equity-related attainment gaps, as it reduces disruption and variability in learning experiences.

4. Innovation grows through diversity of thought

Networks bring together educators from different contexts - rural and urban, large and small, ELC and primary, primary and secondary, CLD partners and employers. This diversity sparks innovative thinking and encourages new approaches that are more creative and responsive to all children and young people's needs.

5. Leadership is distributed and empowered

Collaborative networks cultivate leadership at all levels - classroom practitioners, early learning and childcare practitioners, support staff, senior leaders, and partners. By recognising that improvement is everyone's responsibility, Scotland builds a system where leadership is grown, not appointed.

6. Communities benefit from shared responsibility for children and young people's wellbeing

Stronger relationships between settings, families and community organisations create a supportive ecosystem around every child or young person. Collaboration ensures that the right support is provided at the right time, in the right setting.

7. The system is more resilient and adaptive

A connected system learns faster. Collaborative networks help educators respond more quickly to challenges - whether arising from

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION AND FURTHER CO-DESIGN

curriculum change, societal pressures, or the ever-evolving needs of children and young people

In practical terms, clusters or associated schools groups that form 3-18 learning communities are encouraged to think proactively, alongside local partnerships, about:

- Planned opportunities to spend time together on curriculum design
- What are the “not for sale” interactions, experiences, spaces and times that all children and young people across our cluster will access
- The conditions that will support us to work effectively together across the 3-18 learner journey.

Provocations

Where are the connections to support us to work as a 3-18 community or cluster over the enactment phase of the curriculum improvement cycle?

How does our learning community ensure a coherent learning journey for every child and young person?

<https://youtu.be/mjx7BUZQHWw?si=v6I9vVIAS4mehDIT>

Communities of practice and enquiry - [Enquiry in Education | Self-directed professional learning | Professional Learning | Education Scotland](#)

John Hattie (2018) - [Collective Teacher Efficacy](#) (10 minute video clip)

Dr Vicki Hargraves, The Education Hub, NZ - [Using data for inquiry and improvement](#)

Professional learning and practical activities:

These will be available in 2027/28.

4.5 Knowing our own learning and support needs

Inclusive curriculum is the underpinning principle of Scottish education.

This inclusive approach depends on the reflective practice of educators as they guide and adapt pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of children and young people.

This is reflected in the General Teaching Council’s revised Professional Standards for teacher registration, career-long professional learning and leadership and management. Educators aligned to other professional standards will identify similar links.

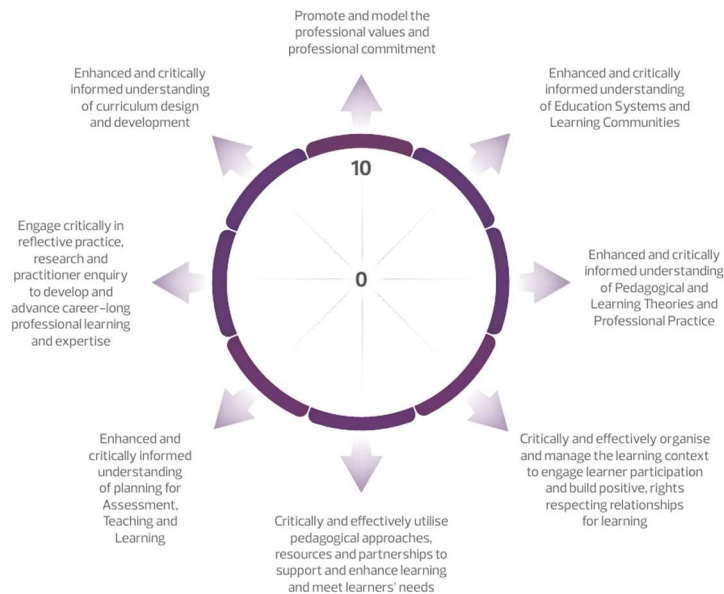
These make it clear that inclusive, reflective approaches to teaching and learning are fundamental for all who works in Scottish settings and schools. Scottish universities also play an important role in preparing teachers to meet these Professional Standards.

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These standards provide a framework that supports the professional growth of educators throughout their career. They emphasise the importance of curriculum-making as a core professional responsibility at every stage of an educator's career, contributing to improvements in outcomes for every child or young person in Scotland.

Leadership in curriculum therefore extends beyond strategic planning and decision-making, although these too are important. Effective evaluation and strong leadership at all levels evolves curriculum in meaningful and ambitious ways.

GTCS Self-Evaluation Wheel: Standard for Career-long Professional Development



3

Provocations:

GTCS Self Evaluation Wheel

[65de09220f29fe2765cef499_GTB421~1.PDF](#)

What are my key strengths as a curriculum maker?

What one aspect of this resource might help my development goals this year?

Who might also be working on this that I could link with?

What other sources of support can I identify that will help me in my role enacting the curriculum improvement cycle?

More directly related to CIC... /

A range of professional learning is available:

[Professional Learning | Education Scotland](#)

³ GTCS Self Evaluation Wheel [65de09220f29fe2765cef499_GTB421~1.PDF](#)