

Building learning power



How to help young people become
better real-life learners



Professor Guy Claxton
University of Bristol



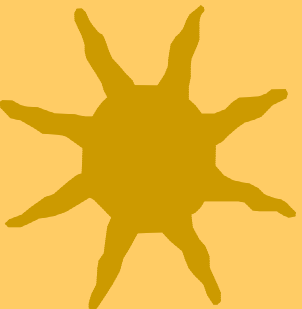
Two roads to raising achievement



★ ‘Towing’ / spoon-feeding



★ ‘Building learning power’



★ Both are kinds of ‘good practice’

★ But there are different costs and benefits



Independent schools...



★ Get good results, say the inspectors...



★ ‘Spoonfeeding works, but it works at the expense of something British schools have always been good at: turning out young people able to be inventive, creative, independent-minded, even awkward’



Tony Hubbard, ISI report



What Emily worries about...

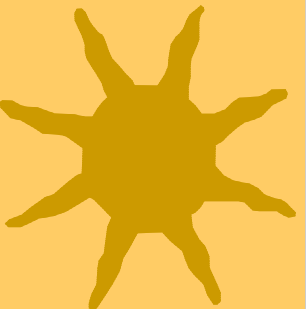
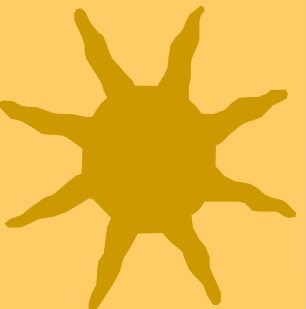
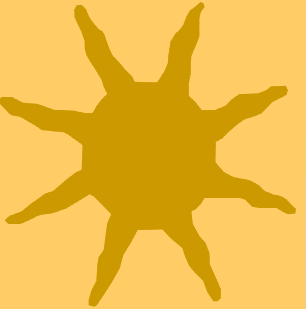


★ ‘I guess I could call myself smart. I mean I can usually get good grades. Sometimes I worry though that I’m not equipped to achieve what I want, that I’m just a tape recorder repeating back what I’ve heard. I worry that once I’m out of school and people don’t keep handing me information with questions...I’ll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

– Emily, aged 15, GCSE student



They haven't 'learned how to learn' – but they should have...

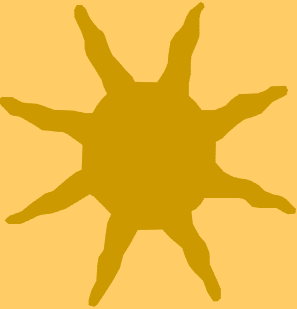


★ ‘For young Britons in the 21st century teaching needs to serve three functions: the transmission of knowledge for a world built on information, the broadening of horizons in a country still scarred by disadvantage, and **learning how to learn in preparation for a lifetime of change.**’

– David Miliband, January 2003



The changing world



★ Work

★ Relationships



★ Geography

★ Belonging

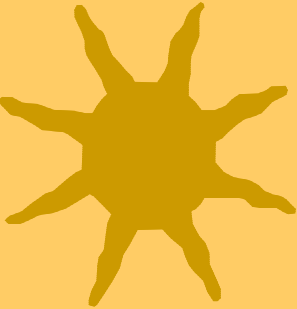
★ Identity



★ Complex, uncertain and demanding...



The wider picture



★ ‘In times of change, learners will inherit the earth, while the learned will find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists’ Eric Hoffer



★ ‘Since we cannot know what knowledge will be needed in the future it is senseless to try to teach it in advance. Instead our job must be to try to turn out young people who love learning so much, and who learn so well, that they will be able to learn whatever needs to be learnt’ John Holt





So building students' learning power is socially relevant, but does it deliver the results?



★ 'For nearly 20 years it has been known that students with more elaborated conceptions of learning perform better in public examinations at age 16'



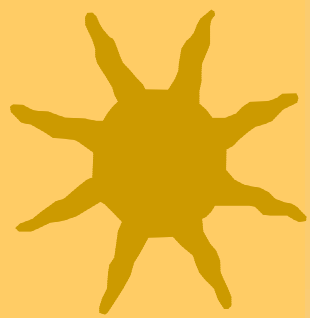
★ 'The more students are supported as autonomous learners, the higher their school performance'



★ '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



So what are good learners (as opposed to successful students) like?

What do they do?

What do they enjoy?

How do they feel?



What makes an effective learner?



★ Techniques – mind maps, study skills

★ Conditions – knowing when and how

★ Habits of mind – dispositions

★ Pleasures – values and interests



★ These can all be cultivated, and develop over different time scales...





*One way of thinking about what
'learning power' consists of*

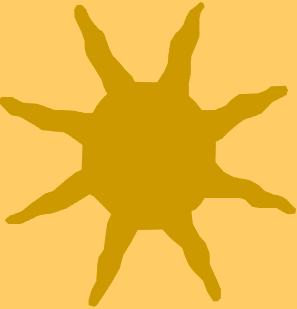


- ★ Resilience – locking on to learning
- ★ Resourcefulness – knowing what to do when you don't know what to do
- ★ Reflection – strategies and self-awareness
- ★ Relationships – learning alone and with others





For example...



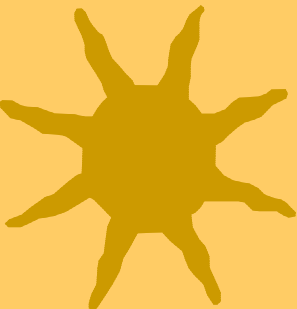
★ Determination

★ Absorption



★ Questioning

★ Reverie



★ Metalearning

★ Revising

★ Collaboration

★ Empathy



Resilience: stickability and tenacity



- * Tolerating confusion and frustration

- * Being patient – ‘negative capability’

- * Enjoying challenge

- * Being curious - asking questions

- * Getting rapt

- * Minimising distraction





Resourcefulness: learning in different ways



★ Getting informed – data, details and patterns



★ Experimenting – messing about

★ Imagination – visualisation, mental rehearsal, metaphor



★ Intuition – hunches, inklings, glimmerings

★ Hard thinking – analysis, logic, criticism

★ Scavenging and capitalising



Reflection: planning and adapting



★ Taking stock – ‘is it working?’

★ Planning – being methodical

★ Opportunism



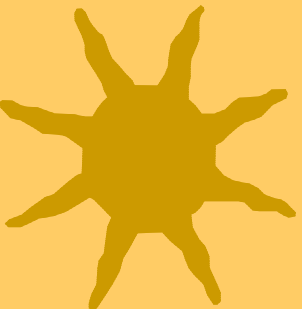
★ Knowing yourself as a learner

★ Using the rhythms of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’

– Hunch breaks

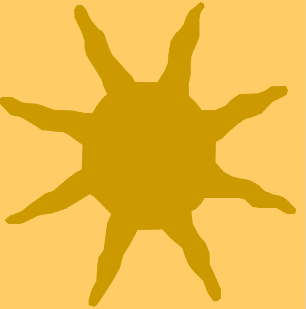
– Walks

– Holidays



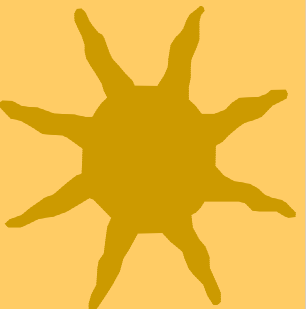


Relationships: making the most of other people



★ Standing your ground

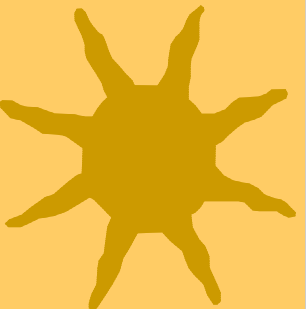
★ Supports and sounding boards



★ Collaboration – teams are more than the sum of their parts

★ Other people's shoes - empathy

★ Models



★ Critics and commentators



Building students' learning power: core principles



- ★ Split screen thinking and planning
- ★ Stretching learning muscles all the time
- ★ ‘Gentle pressure relentlessly applied’
 - small and sustained
 - don't be put off by initial resistance
- ★ Sharing some control for what, how where and when: you have to trust
- ★ Transparency of intentions and criteria
- ★ Everything is an experiment: we are learning too
- ★ Students as knowledge-creators about learning





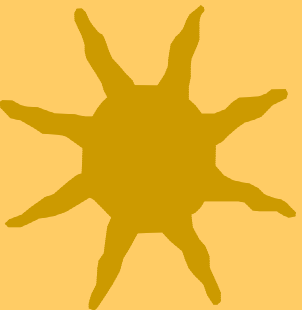
The BLP climate involves more than teaching techniques



The words and the language we use give powerful messages...



– ‘learning’, not ‘work’ language



– ‘effort’, not ‘ability’ language

– ‘could be’, not ‘is’ language



It also involves the values we model...



★ Daring not to know

★ Thinking aloud about teaching

★ ‘Thinking like a scientist’ etc

★ Show your work in progress

★ Have a learning project





And a BLP culture talks explicitly about learning power all the time



★ Explaining –

- Talk about Building Learning Power
- Discuss when/how students get their ideas
- Make time, during ‘meaty learning’, for reflection on process
- Learning logs
- Things in the news





And what about...



★ The school council

★ Assistants and supervisors



★ Clubs and games

★ Report writing

★ Contact with parents

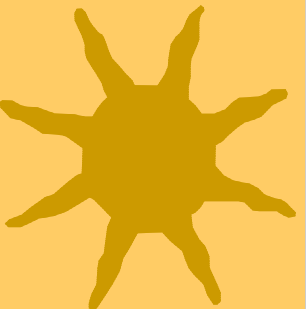
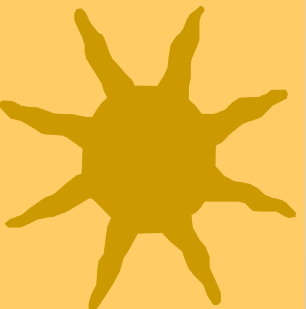
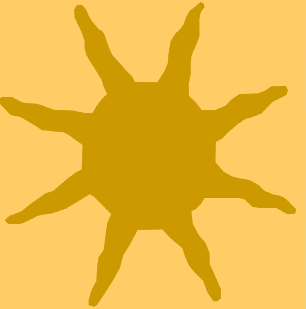


★ Staff meetings

★ CPD policy



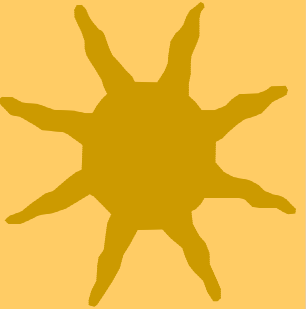
This is just the beginning...



- ★ We need models of teaching as LP coaching that are
 - Coherent rather than bitty
 - Comprehensive rather than partial
 - Credible rather than commercial
 - Cultural rather than technical
 - Cumulative rather than static
 - Community rather than classroom-only
 - For real-life and not just in school



And the sting in the tail...



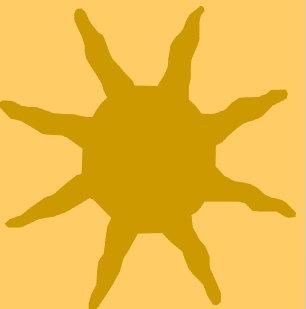
★ Those enjoyable, challenging experiences...

– Do they last?

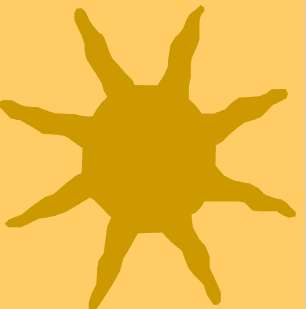
– Do they strengthen?

– Do they spread?

– Do they deepen?



– Happy campers and wishful thinking won't do



– What makes for transfer: the \$64000 question



For more information



★ *Building Learning Power*, by Guy Claxton, TLO Ltd, Bristol



★ *Wise Up: Learning to Live the Learning Life*, by Guy Claxton, Network Press



★ *Be Creative: Essential Steps to Rejuvenate Your Life and Work*, by Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas, BBC Worldwide

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★ www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk