

DOWNLOAD 1

KEEPING LEARNING UNDER REVIEW

ELLI may offer direction to both learner and teacher as they set out on their learning adventure but it has many other benefits.

Schools find that ELLI:

- motivates and encourages students to put effort into improving their *Learning Power*;
- gives students and teachers progress feedback so that they can decide which 'learning dimensions' they are going to target as they move forward;
- enables teachers to determine which of their interventions to improve *Learning Power* are being effective;
- gives teachers information about individual students or classes that will enable them, to discuss and guide *Learning Power* development more precisely;
- validates the progress made by students towards conventional attainment measures.

If developing *Learning Power* is successful, students won't just tick a box to show that they 'can' make use of their resilience or manage their social relationships, their schools will see whether, over time, students spontaneously make more and better use of learning dispositions and tools. Unless students have made these tools their own, can intuitively see the point of them, and call them to mind for themselves when they are needed, the job of Elli and its learning dimensions has not yet done its job.

The keys to learning growth

Sustained improvement in the adoption of learning behaviors is recognizable in three principal dimensions:

1. the frequency or how often behaviors are being used;
2. the range or scope of contexts in which they are used; and
3. the skill with which they are employed.

Frequency

Getting better = using behaviors more frequently

This is the easiest dimension to activate. The distinction between skill and habit is important here, skills are what you *can* do, whereas habits are what you *do* do. A skill that is only rarely employed, or only employed when adult-directed, is at best embryonic. Initially the aim is to activate the skill more frequently through direct intervention with a view to reducing the level of intervention as the skill becomes stronger through more frequent use. The target is to develop the skill into a *habit* that the student employs frequently, without support, as and when the need arises.

Teachers can best assist by spotting when students use a weaker learning behavior, point this it out and celebrating its use.

Scope

Getting better = using behaviors in different situations and contexts

Progress here expects a growing number of different situations within which the skill is deployed. The young person who is tenacious and thoughtful on their play station can equally be defeatist and impulsive in the classroom. They have the latent skills, but fail to recognize that the perseverance that leads to success on a play station is precisely the same mindset that is needed for success in the lesson at school. Initially the skill is used only in circumstances that are familiar, but the aim here is to help students to recognize and exploit opportunities to utilize their leaning behaviors in new and uncharted territory.

Teachers look out for, and comment on, students using habits, however tenuously, in different situations wherever that may be and should include the playground.

Skill

Getting better = becoming more skilled in the use of the behavior(s) under scrutiny

The adoption of this dimension is by far the most subtle. The teacher may start by encouraging students to ask more questions, more often and in different situations or subjects but needs to rapidly turn their attention to the *quality* of the questions that are being asked. It is not difficult to describe the attributes of a high level, sophisticated questioner who is skilled at asking incisive, generative questions, but it is very difficult to *map out* and *sequence* the steps between the natural curiosity of a three year-old and the sophisticated skill-set of the consummate question-asker or enquirer. This is the teacher's challenge, and the reason why this is the most complex of the three dimensions to achieve. However, once this dimension is on the road to sustained development, the impact on how the mentoring teacher can then set targets, enable self and peer assessment, design tasks, and plan the curriculum and the like is immense.

The learning-friendly classroom is the teacher's most powerful tool in encouraging their students to become more skilled in the use of their learning behaviors.