

LEARNING and the LEARNING MIND

Becoming 'match fit'!

Any tennis player getting ready for a match not only practices specific shots and abilities—but also works on their general stamina, strength and coordination. They work to develop self-awareness and their ability to be strategic whilst on court. They make sure that their bodies and minds are as fit and sharp as they can be. **Developing students' *Learning Power* is about helping young people develop this kind of general, all-round, learning fitness and readiness. It's not just about teaching them a narrow set of learning techniques.**

To work on fitness, you don't spend all your time in the gym on one exercise or on one piece of equipment. You follow a balanced, varied work-out regime that relies on proven knowledge about muscle groups and the cardiovascular system. **Likewise, *Learning Power* uses knowledge of learning and the mind to create a coherent picture of the mental agility and emotional stamina that characterize a good learner.**

Developing the learning mind

Learning is the new mantra and much is talked and written about how student learning can be best enhanced. In practice this means:

- helping students *learn more*;
 - helping them *learn better*;
 - helping them become *better learners*.
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These three goals aren't the same, and methods that work for one don't always suit the others. Spoon-feeding may improve results, but it doesn't develop self-awareness. It is possible to help students learn more without helping them become better at learning. Some ways of raising achievement can actually damage or undermine students' learning ability. Helping young people learn better is also not the same thing as helping them to become better learners. It is, of course, possible to help them learn better by providing endless support and guidance—but when that guidance and support is taken away, they will, likely as not, have become more dependent, not less!

Developing students' *Learning Power* is much more about developing students as learners and working to increase their portable learning power so that they will not only take away a few certificates from school but also, a greater confidence, competence and curiosity to face the uncertainties that life will deliver.

Being a good learner is not just a matter of learning a few techniques like mind-mapping or a brain work-out. It is about the whole person: attitudes, values, self-image and relationships, as well as learning skills and strategies. Being a good real-life learner means knowing;

- what is worth learning, being able to choose between 'fact and fake' or how to use the time available wisely;
- what they are good at, and not so good at, when applying learning skills and techniques;
- who can help and add value to a learning experience;
- how to face confusion and frustration without getting upset or giving up; and
- what the best learning tool might be for the job at hand.

Just as being a reader involves much more than simply being able to read, being an accomplished learner means enjoying learning, regarding one's self as a learner, seeking out learning situations and knowing how to get the best out of every potential learning experience.

Building 'learning character'

Helping student learners understand how they learn and how to improve their learning capacity is one of the most important functions schools can offer. The power to learn, '*Learning Power*' and its impact, not only on student performance but on their lifelong contributions as citizens has been the subject of academic research both by the University of Bristol in the UK and Penn State University, USA. Their research has found that 'learning is learnable', assessment needs to be dynamic with interventions directed and managed and when the critical dimensions of learning are understood and applied, learners can transform their learning attitudes and dispositions.

[See the Section of this website on EVALUATION](#)

How students use *Learning Power*

When learners become aware of their *Learning Power* through structured interventions and opportunities to improve it, they become:

- more reflective and aware of themselves as learners;
- more confident and motivated to learn;
- more willing and able to take responsibility by 'owning' their learning for themselves;
- more intentioned in their learning;
- keener to carry on their understanding of learning as they move beyond school;
- more likely to realize their potential and to gain grades that were previously regarded as beyond them;
- more confident socially and able to learn with, and from, one another;
- more able to manage transitions and take change in their stride.