

LEARNING TO LEARN IN SCHOOLS PHASE 4

Year One Executive Summary March 2009

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The Learning to Learn in Schools Project builds on work completed in Phase 1 (Rodd 2001); Phase 2 (Rodd 2003) and Phase 3 (Higgins *et al.* 2007). Phase 3 was successful in enabling teachers to focus on improving the quality of learning in their schools and this could be identified in pupils' attainment, motivation and their wider achievement. Further the teachers themselves valued the opportunity for professional development and enquiry provided by the project.

Phase 4 sees an emphasis on sustainability (the project continues to work with regions and schools involved in Phase 3: Cheshire, Cornwall and Enfield) and replicability (a new local authority, Northumberland, has been included in the project and new schools have also joined in existing regions).

The process of teacher inquiry as practised within the Phase 3 and 4 projects grounds the individual in context, in relevance to the learners and sustains the process through the increased motivation brought by rapid and responsive feedback. This is supported by the focus on two key values from the project: teacher autonomy and the responsibility to make public the work that is done.



Cross case study data

30 case studies have been submitted in Year One of Learning to Learn in Schools Phase 4. Of these, six were from Cheshire, twelve from Cornwall, schools in Enfield produced five and in Northumberland, seven.



The case studies come from a range of school types across the four LAs: one came from a special school catering for pupils from three to 19 years; one from the Learning Space which is Local Authority based; 16 were from the primary age phase; one was from a middle school (nine to 13 years); and nine were from schools in the secondary age phase.

Most teachers and schools are new to the project and learning to learn (n=17); however ten have carried on in the same combination (school and teacher) as they were involved in Phase 3. There is also a case study from an experienced Phase 3 teacher now working in a school not involved in the project previously and there are two schools involved in Phase 3 but the teachers are new to the project.

The project themes have enabled networking to occur across the project and for teachers and partners inside and outside of the project to access the research of the schools. They have provided a basis for talk across the project about what learning to learn might look like and be developed and this has been very useful.

Quotes from pupils in the case studies indicated the ways in which a language for talking about learning has been important in developing awareness of learning as a process inside and outside of school. New to Phase 4 is a sophisticated and pragmatic perspective on real life learning, characterised by a critical engagement with all aspects of learning and an ethical awareness of a student's right to engage and be engaged with ideas relating to learning in this way.

Attainment data reported in this year's case studies supports findings from Phase 3: that L2L students tend to do at least as well as expected in cognitive and curricular measures. There is an emerging trend which suggests that secondary schools carrying on from Phase 3 might be more successful than comparator schools outside the project. This is perhaps not surprising given the general tendency for significant educational change to take time.

The case studies have provided a wealth of data on teachers' perspectives of what L2L brings to the classroom. These include impact on their students, such as enthusiasm and motivation for learning, greater learner independence and better peer relationships, and impacts on themselves and colleagues, particularly challenges to ideas about their role as a teacher.

We have continued to include in the case study structure a section where we ask teachers to reflect on the role that learning to learn has played in their project. Results have shown associations with the emphasis on process, development of language, learning partnerships developing, students-teachers in schools and teacher-teacher across the network.

Using the Self Description Questionnaire has shown that self concept tends to be more positive in younger L2L children, which is a common finding with measures of self concept or esteem. There are differing patterns of response across the SDQ subscales for boys and girls, although this gender difference is more pronounced in some L2L schools than in others. When these findings from the SDQ were fed back to the teachers involved in the project a number of them made direct use of them.



Hazelbury Infant School, Enfield



This project aimed to investigate whether using the TASC wheel for problem solving improves self esteem and motivation by encouraging children to take responsibility and reflect upon their own learning. It is clear that most of the 71 children's attitudes to learning and self esteem improved. In addition,

more children were measured as being on task in lessons that used the TASC wheel. This result was consistent across three year groups.

Marlborough Primary School, Cornwall

As a result of this case study there is an ethos of learning throughout the school – children see that teachers are engaged in the same process. Risk taking, exploration and trialling of new ideas, has become a cultural principle. Successful learners need to have control of their learning. Learning is not passive – it does not come to those who wait or merely respond – it is essential to question and seek out.



Archbishop Benson Primary, Cornwall



It was hoped that the aims would enable pupils to take greater control, develop resilience and more responsibility for their learning. Promoting pupil voice in a skills based curriculum using learning detectives gives pupils ownership of learning which has a positive impact

on levels of motivation, confidence, independence, self esteem and attainment. It promotes mutual respect within and beyond the classroom, has a positive impact on language development and talking about learning

Wooler First School, Northumberland

This project investigates how effective marking ladders are in supporting children's self-assessment of their own writing. We found that they were a useful tool to support children's self assessment of their own writing and help them to focus on the process of writing. However it is important that marking ladders remain adaptable and can be differentiated for different abilities, especially for the more able. Overall they are effective but have to be adapted to suit the pupils and the context.



Weaverham Primary School, Cheshire



We aimed to support children in acknowledging and dealing with their emotions in such a way as to promote readiness for learning and to enable them to acquire the necessary tools to foster

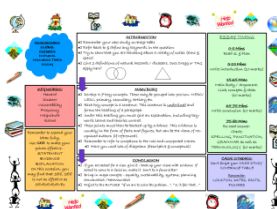
rewarding friendships, in other words to develop emotional literacy. In this respect we were aiming to improve readiness for learning and individual resilience through the use of SEAL materials in Circle Time and the provision of a Nurture Group.

Carterhatch Primary School, Enfield

This case study explored classroom organisation and asked which was most effective for learning. After completing the research, it was evident that children showed greater progression when working in larger groups. This group work did create noise that needed to be monitored to ensure it is productive. When working individually many of the children were not engaged and lost confidence because they could not rely on their peers for support.



King Edward VI School, Northumberland

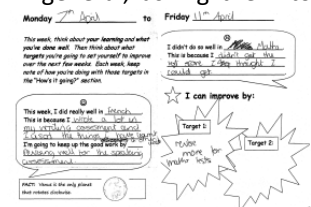


Our aim was to investigate potential tools for learning which would enable us to support students in developing responsibility & resourcefulness. Our ultimate aim was to develop a means of fostering

independent lifelong learners with the skills to fulfil their potential. Learning mats were found to be a valuable resource that supported students in becoming independent learners. Year 13 students responded positively, however they appeared less effective in supporting less able Year 10.

Tytherington High School, Cheshire

This project aimed to provide students with a reflection log to support reflection and discussion about learning. It was hoped this would improve attitudes to learning and make students more aware of their learning styles and abilities. The project found that although students were positive about learning and school life in general, asking them to reflect about a whole week of learning was difficult. The key reasons were a reluctance to write on a regular basis and a lack of awareness of their ability to reflect and evaluate learning.



Learning Relationships and Interactions in the Classroom

Learning to Learn classrooms are developing styles of interaction and discourse which allow for more challenge, more metacognitive thinking and a greater range of roles for teachers and learners.

Relationships display more flexibility and learners exhibit more collaborative and responsible behaviour.

Teachers report being able to step back from didactic roles where appropriate and allow space for thinking, discussion and creativity.

The evidence for this in Year One case studies is mainly located in the quality, quantity and intent of talk.

Tools for Learning

We continue to develop our theoretical understanding of tools in Learning to Learn, exploring their pragmatic and catalytic properties.

Tools for learning have been adopted and adapted by teachers as part of a growing engagement with the process of enquiry.

Tools have been diverse in terms of content but they tend to be used in one of four ways: as scaffolds, measures, frames or lenses.

Technology continues to play a part in Learning to Learn, strategically used to support the development of understanding of talk, relationships and student autonomy.

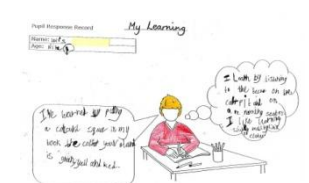
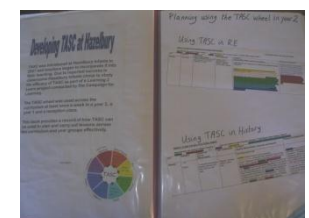
Students as Researchers

Projects which utilise pupil voice are relatively common, as in L2L Phase 3; however, projects which actively involve the students in research about learning are rare.

The ideals of students as researchers shows considerable overlap with the ideals of the L2L project: inclusivity, democracy, joint enquiry and increased learner self knowledge.

Schools have used two key approaches to operationalise students as researchers in schools. These approaches have been adapted and scaled up or down depending on the age of the students and the experience of talking about and enquiring into learning. These are Learning Detectives and student research groups.

It has become important to develop a typology that explores student involvement in the research process as well as engagement with learning to learn. This will support teachers in thinking about students as researchers and how this approach can be used to support meaningful talk and social interactions in the classroom.



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