Clarity
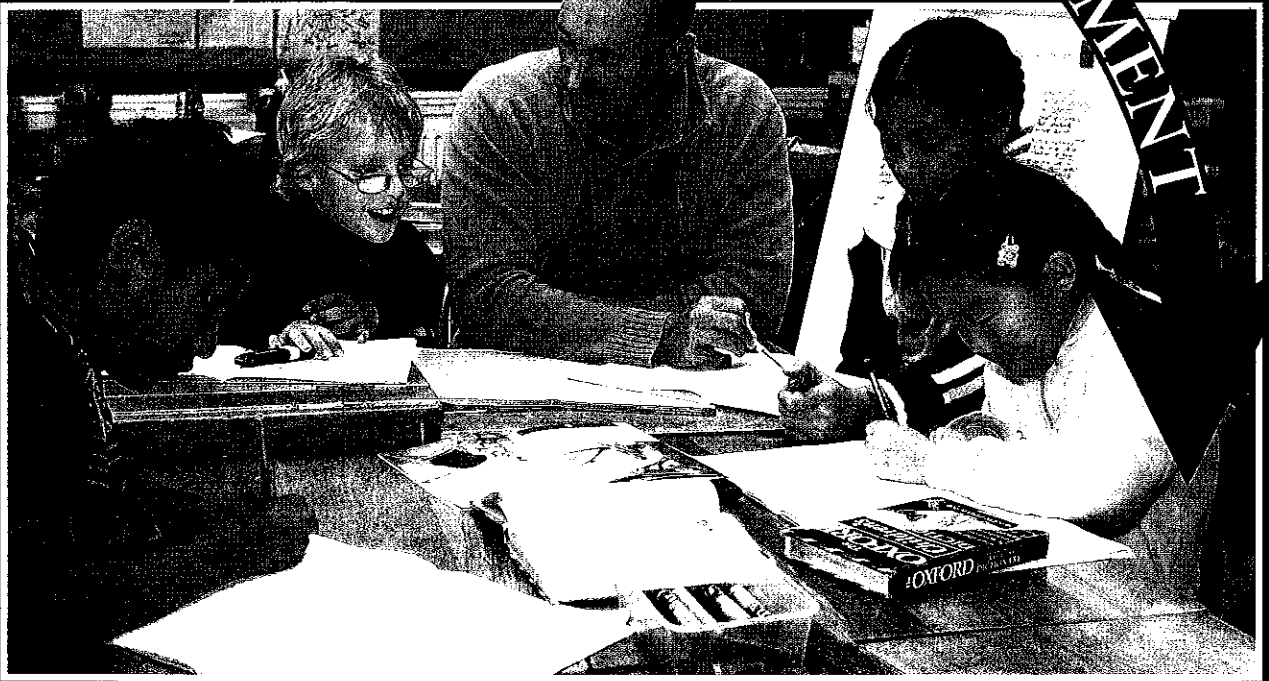## in the
Classroom

USING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

BUILDING LEARNING-FOCUSED RELATIONSHIPS

Michael Absolum

OVERVIEW

*'I have never before seen a school where the pupils
are so naturally responsive and independent
in their work or where the relationship between teachers
and scholars so nearly approaches the ideal.'*

Extract from McClune & Lord, 1916

ll want students who have high expectations of themselves as learners; students who feel
dent about their capacity to learn, who set high goals for their learning, and who work
hemselves to construct enjoyable, challenging learning pathways to their futures.

his book contains research-based principles, strategies and techniques that teachers can
use to help students to learn: to help them be the type of students we all want.
outlines what teachers need to think about, and how they need to act towards students
ncourage them to become strong partners in the teaching/learning endeavour. It also
's how teachers can teach their students the skills they need to be effective partners, and
teachers need to know in order to be effective partners themselves.

he book is about more than an approach to teaching and assessment; it is about
the nature of student learning;
the nature of the relationship that needs to be present to sustain that learning;
what the teacher needs to do in order for students to learn powerfully and
effectively.

n teachers use these approaches the classroom becomes one in which:
udent achievement improves: when students have a clearer understanding of what
:hievement looks like, they have a greater chance of achieving; and they do.

udent behaviour improves: once students really engage in learning, their behaviour
nproves because their attention is focused on learning.

*'The way I speak to the children has changed and is now more learning-focused and I've seen a real
improvement in the behaviour of the kids.'*

udent ownership of learning improves: the students have a clearer idea of their learning
urney because they are fully involved in every step of the process.

*'They tell me what they need help with, they really do. It just amazes me what they know. I thought,
"Oh, they won't be able to think up how I could help them", but they do, they really do.'*
*'The children can see where they need help and how well they are going. It's amazing really how
honest and sincere their judgements become.'*
*'They learn to think about how their learning is going and what else they need help with. They're
more confident to ask for help. Much more willing to stay on the mat for further support.'*

udent engagement increases: the quality of work becomes more important than the
iantity, and the students — being more focused on their own learning — are keen to see
eir own growth and progress.

*'They are more focused, they can see where they're going and what they're able to do. They have
strategies to use, they have more confidence and can see the results of their efforts.'*
'It [learning intentions] sets things out clearly in your mind, and with the success criteria it's a really

5. **Enjoyment returns to teaching:** because everything to do with student behaviour is focused
   on learning, the quality of the working environment is good for everyone.

   - *'All my conversations with the children are about learning and I no longer have to nag.'*
   - *'It's revitalised my teaching, it's given me a burst of enthusiasm. It's given me more energy and it's
     more rewarding and the students are far more focused on their achievement.'*
   - *'I haven't felt like this about my teaching for years, it's just great.'*
   - *'It brings the joy back into teaching again.'*

This book is about how you can create these conditions in your classroom. It begins by
outlining a view of learning, that we see as a precondition to all of the understandings needed
by teachers and students to create effective conditions for learning. It then provides a detailed
description of what these understandings are, the implications for planning, and finally, how
family can be brought into partnership with teacher and student to further support learning.

'Learning's the thing'

Every teacher knows a lot about the nature of learning. In our view there are two critical
aspects to learning that should be highlighted from the beginning.

Learning, to be effective, must enable
the learner to 'own' the learning *process*

Owning a new skill, concept or understanding can only be achieved through a process of deep
engagement with the skill, concept or understanding; practising it, trying it out, using it. Marie
Clay (2005) describes how young children actively work at learning to read and write:

*' . . . young constructive readers and writers work at problem-solving sentences and messages, choose
between alternatives, read and write sentences, work on word after word, with the flexibility to change
responses rapidly at any point. As they attend to several different kinds of knowledge, they are searching,
selecting, rejecting, self-monitoring, and self-correcting.'*

Most young children do learn with minimal teacher intervention; they do it because they
want to learn what others know.

As teachers, we commit a grave disservice against students when we merely want them to
know how others think about things. This causes us to privilege passivity over activity in
learning, and removes a large part of the incentive for students to learn. If all we have to do
as students is demonstrate that we have learnt how others understand things, what is in it for
us? The understanding of others is of no use to us, unless it helps us to improve our
understanding of the world, and we will not know this unless we, ourselves, can produce a
better understanding. For example, we don't learn language merely to know what others think
and understand. We learn it to enable others to know what we think. We learn it to be able to
put our perspective *on* the world *to* the world. We can only practise putting our perspective

lom, we have to practise interpreting their wisdom in terms of our own understandings. 'he best learners are not those who follow our rules about how they should learn, but e who listen to our rules and then follow them if and as it suits them as they determinedly ue their own learning. These people are *originators*: they ask, they challenge, they try out own tests and ideas of what a concept or skill is really about; they constantly show tive and are creative; they want the concepts for themselves so they can see and rstand the world better. Good teaching supports all students in enhancing their ability to riginators. Too much learning in classrooms is passive.

earning is the process of testing for a difference between what you currently do or rstand, and what you want to do or be able to understand; and being able to take med action and problem-solve to reduce the gap. If we want to write 'better', then we to compare what we do write with 'better' writing and find ways to reduce the gap. This nat learning is about. Teaching is about motivating students to identify the gap and ng them find ways to reduce it.

s learning progresses, new gaps become visible and need to be reduced in the same way. iroom activity is not about learning if it is not about gap reduction.

ning, to be significant, must result
ie learner 'owning' *what is learnt*

iership' of what is learnt is gained when the learner can use new skills or concepts as tools iemselves to see the world better or more clearly. Real learning is about engagement with cills, concepts or understandings to be learnt, so we are able to make those skills, concepts inderstandings our own and have them become part of how we interpret and interact the world. The process of gaining ownership — the process of learning — progresses 'I hear the concepts of others', to 'I know and understand the concepts of others', to 'I for myself and can use creatively for my own purposes the concepts of others. They are *my* concepts. My voice, my interpretation, my style, is visible in the way I describe and iese concepts'. Too much learning gets no further than halfway through the process.

| I hear | ➡ | I understand | ➡ | I own |
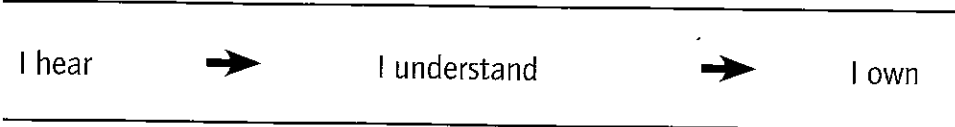
: about these examples of owning new learning.

irning to ride a bike
ever a physical skill is the focus of learning, we acknowledge that active practice is important. ever just a matter of learning 'how to ride a bike'; you want to learn to ride a bike. arning 'how' is an important part of the journey, but is certainly not the end destination. You what skilled riding looks like and you attempt to imitate it. You attempt to reduce the gap en good riding and your riding. With repeated attempts — with practice — you find that

you become more skilful you realise that riding a bike is no longer something that you can merely do, you now have a sense of deep competence. You are no longer tentative about riding across the footpath, or along a narrow walkway, or of weaving in and out of the path of other cyclists. You make adjustments to your direction without thinking about it. You can even take your hands off the handlebars, show off a little, and continue to ride with minimal risk of falling off. You see yourself as a bit of a trick-cyclist. Riding is one of the things that you can do, it is your skill.

2. Learning to write by hand
In your early days at school, handwriting lessons went on day after day. It was never a matter of just learning 'how to write'. You have to go through the 'how' to actually learn to write, but as you practised you gradually managed to reduce the gap between your marks on the paper and the exemplars that the teacher put up on the board, and you came to know that the marks meant something.

Then something else began to happen. Over time your own personal style of handwriting began to develop and emerge and you noticed that it was different from that of all of the other students in your class, and certainly different from that of your teacher and parents. Eventually you even stopped having to think about how to form letters. Somehow, as you reduced the gap between the exemplar and what you produced, your own handwriting style emerged.

No one told you to do this, you did not think about it, it just happened. The active practice *transformed* the taught script into something that you alone *own*. Uniquely.

3. Learning to be numerate
The point of learning a concept is to learn it so well that it becomes a part of how the learner views the world. We do not want students just to know the number framework in mathematics. We want them to deeply understand it so they can apply it easily, automatically, and whenever they need it in their lives. We want them to be able to toss numbers around in their heads, rearrange them, create new patterns, look at patterns in new ways, play games with them; in short, we want them to be a bit of a trick-cyclist with numbers.

We don't want them to learn 'how to add, subtract, multiply and divide'. We want them to add, subtract, multiply and divide. Learning 'how to' leaves the skill or concept as a thing external to them. That is learning, but not as we want it. They have to learn 'how', but that by itself is not enough. Teaching students so they are numerate, rather than just knowing about numeracy, so they have their own personal style and approach to numbers, requires the same conditions for learning as those we have highlighted for handwriting and bike riding. We have to provide them with extended opportunities to become deeply skilful; to own numeracy. They need repeated opportunities to engage with the manipulation of numbers to solve a wider range of different problems; the more the better. If we do this, then over time the number system will come to be second nature to them.

4. Learning to speak
Who teaches us language? Learning language is a somewhat mysterious process, but we know that as we get better at it, especially at speaking and writing it, we do bring our own

iage users. We learn it by using whatever vocabulary and grammatical control we have
to communicate, and evaluating the feedback about our attempt — did the person
rstand us? Did the person use more elaborate language in their reply? Is there anything
ggest that there is a gap between my language ability and that of those around me? —
ractising more elaborate language to try to reduce the gap. Over time, as we get better,
evelop our own style of speaking and writing, using the grammatical conventions and
xicon of our language, creatively and imaginatively, to communicate.

arning physics at university

ce education research shows that students can learn disjointed sets of 'facts' and formulae
ng to science that will enable them to pass exams, but leaves them feeling less positive
: science, less confident that they understand it, less able to see themselves as scientists,
ess able to see the relevance of what they have learnt (Weiman, 2005). These students
learnt concepts and rules of science to the point of understanding, but not to the point
nership. If teaching leaves students feeling like this, what is the point?

arning to teach

ifficult to use 'learning to teach' as an example of owning the learning because so many
were in fact taught to teach in ways that encouraged passivity in students, in ways that
:ked how we were taught as students. At training college, we were taught something of
to teach', but we did most of our learning to teach in our first years in the classroom.
arnt to teach by teaching. And we all developed our own styles of teaching. Whatever
pproach, we own our own teaching; it becomes a part of us to the point where we
be ourselves as teachers.

imple thesis of this book is that students need to be active managers, regulators and
ors of their own learning if they are to learn to the stage where they genuinely own the
ng. All classroom processes need to be directed towards supporting and enabling students
the best managers of their own learning they can be. The role of the teacher is to model
:affold the processes of learning, in order to support students as managers — at all times.

sons that support student ownership

does a lesson that supports student ownership look like in a real classroom?
ble 1 on pages 16–19 gives a generic pattern for a lesson that will enable students to be
artners in the teaching/learning process and to develop the learning through to the stage
ep ownership. We show a normal lesson sequence, the general strategies that are
priate at each part of the sequence, and the type of reaction students will give.

lis generic lesson sequence has been given a context to enhance its use as an exemplar.
:arning is about making a 'balloon dog', such as a clown might make at a children's party.
s a light-hearted learning, deliberately chosen so that you don't have to worry about its
cance or relevance, or particular subject-specific teaching technique, and can focus

Points to note about this lesson sequence
In the introduction
The key objective is to get the students really engaged with the learning and the experiencing of
success and the confidence to take risks — like attempting the next task. What you are looking
for is very active, buzzy engagement; enabling students to really engage with *each* aspect of the
lesson helps to achieve this, even if it does take some time. For example, having them evaluate
the learning intention and the relevance of the learning intention, or to think of their own ideas
as to why such learning is important — individually, in pairs, in fours, and then as a class — as
it really brings them fully into partnership with you. It enables them to think about it almost as
deeply as you did when you were doing the planning. This motivates them and gives them a
commitment to the learning intention, but you do need to check that your strategy has been
successful. Sometimes you know this from the buzz, but if that is not there, then you need to
check. Checking, itself, helps build a learning-focused relationship as it shows students that you
are really serious about staying in step with them and their learning. Sharing the learning
intention and the success criteria is not just about enabling the students to be clear — in fact it
is mainly about motivation, as you can see from the student's reactions.

The amount of time it takes to achieve this type of learning sequence will vary. In the
example given in Table 1, the sequence is described in some detail, and when beginning a new
unit of learning all the elements will be apparent. However, not every lesson will necessarily
involve an explicit discussion of each of the elements. For example, relevance for tomorrow's
lesson may simply be that we found it 'tricky' today, and it may be a one-sentence discussion
to establish that relevance. It would be unlikely that an observer would be able to identify
each of the elements in every lesson, but that does not mean they are not there.

The sequence described in the example is not invariant either. While lessons always manage
to start and finish, there are many variations on the order of events in the middle. The exact
order needs to be driven by the needs of the students and the thinking the teacher has done
about how to introduce the learning. For example, preparing for new learning might well
come before you show an exemplar. In the example given, the teacher might have asked
students just to try and make a dog shape out of a balloon before showing an exemplar.

Catering for diverse needs
Each student who does not have their learning needs catered for by the lesson arrangement
becomes alienated, to some extent, from learning. Their learning comes to a halt because the
conditions for them to learn are not present. Depending on their skill and assertiveness levels,
over time this can build up to be a major problem.

Building our ability to support student ownership
Research has confirmed what we know from our experience. Lists of core principles
for effective teaching that best support students can be located easily. Here is one such list:
- Set high expectations and give every learner confidence they can succeed.
- Establish what learners already know and build on it.

TABLE 1: LESSON OR UNIT SEQUENCE FOR LEARNING HOW TO MAKE A DOG SHAPE OUT OF A BALLOON

	Strategy	Student reaction/thinking
Planning	• Plan the lesson or unit in some detail, taking into account what you know of the students' prior knowledge. (See Chapter 9 on planning; also see introduction below for the second part of planning.)	
Introduction		
Sharing learning intentions	• Talk with the students about what you are intending that they learn, and why: 'We are going to learn how to make a dog shape from a balloon.' Make sure you explain why you think it is an important and relevant learning.	'It is good to be included at this stage in considering what to learn next; it is respectful of me as a learner and allows me to genuinely appreciate the need to learn [it]. Having examples of what we are learning to do is really helpful in giving me a sense of the "big picture".'
Modelling/exemplars	• Use models, exemplars, examples, and modelling as appropriate to clarify the intended learning; distinguish between *what* you want them to learn and *how* you want them to learn it.	
Checking clarity	• Check the extent to which students are clear about the learning intentions; make sure you are not just checking their compliance.	'When the teacher checks whether I understand it helps affirm my role in the learning and to be active in doing the work of learning. It is the same when the teacher checks my motivation. At times I'm not convinced that what is intended is worth learning and I would rather do something else. I need to be motivated and the teacher needs to know this. Sometimes I have been very nervous about my next steps in learning, especially at times like moving to another school or starting a new subject. I really appreciate the teacher recognising that I feel like this. Most of the time I am happy to learn. That is what school is for.'
Checking motivation	• Check that students are reasonably motivated to learn; this might be done verbally or non-verbally; real buy-in is critical and if it is not there then you need to know what you are going to do to get it. • Check if the students are confident of the learning or if they have apprehensions that may need to be allayed.	
Sharing process	• Share planning for the whole lesson with the students and seek their views about whether it will meet their needs – they may be happy to test out your planning as they go along – they may know that you plan well and design powerful learning experiences for them.	'Having a look at the planning gives me a chance to get an overview of how the teacher is thinking about how my learning might proceed. It also lets me see if there are bits that might be extra interesting or fun.'
Success criteria	• Introduce the idea of how students will know when they have successfully learnt what is intended (success criteria). Either the teacher provides the success criteria and describes what they mean and why they are there, or success criteria are built with the students from an examination of an exemplar. Each dog will have two ears, a head, four legs, a body and a tail. • Check that the students understand the success criteria.	'I like having a look at the success criteria, and I don't mind whether the teacher tells us what they are or if we derive them with her. If we derive them we really get a good sense of the main features of what we are trying to learn, but sometimes it is more sensible just for the teacher to explain the ones she has listed to us. At these times it is pretty obvious why they are as they are and spending time deriving them would not be worth it.' 'That she checks that we understand the success criteria is really important; just because she has explained them doesn't mean that I understand them at all. I like the way she really invites us to indicate if we don't and how she finds another way of explaining them to those of us who are still stuck. We learn a lot like this.'
Preparing for new learning: 'homing' in the known	• Students spend some time individually or in groups, exploring what they know already about the topic and hypothesising, visualising or attempting what is to be learnt. 'Take one balloon each and have a go at making a dog shape without any help from anyone.' • This might mean seeing what they can already do with the knowledge or skill, and getting a feel for what is coming up, by – having a quick skim read of a textbook chapter and thinking about which bits of it are familiar and which are not; – writing a description of a person (character) without prior instruction; – making mind maps of what is known about the topic so far and of what is	'Getting us to have a go first is really good because it really focuses you on what your starting point is with the learning; it gives you a chance to test out whether you know anything or not. Sometimes you can surprise yourself and discover you know a lot more than you thought. If you didn't try first of all then you are not going to be paying as much attention.' 'I know intuitively that learning is an active process that consists of making new connections and new meanings: the more reason, the more learning. Speaking is better to assist with learning than listening is. Writing is better than reading. You can learn through listening and reading, but you learn more from speaking and writing because expressing your thoughts about what you are learning forces you to make more connections with existing knowledge and therefore make new meanings, and therefore you learn.'

inued:

Strategy

- examining the results of a pre-test that they are aware of to see what concepts, skills or abilities they already have and which ones they don't;
- contemplating or imagining what the learning is likely to mean; a mental rehearsal.
- Roaming might take 30 seconds, or up to an hour. Occasionally it takes longer than this in order to build the confidence of the learner to be ready for a new step.

- Explanation or demonstration of what is to be learnt:
  - Teacher says: 'Now that you have had a chance to make a dog by yourselves — and some of you know a lot of the tricks to doing it — I am going to show you the first step and then let you have a go. It will only take a short time so even if you know the first steps I want you to watch because you might pick up some tips for refining what you do.'
- Check that students have sufficient understanding to have a go themselves; repeat or explain in a different way if necessary.

- Student tries to make the first part of the dog.
- Student compares their effort with the relevant success criteria, the exemplar and with the efforts of their peers.

nt and feedback
- Student seeks comment from peers, especially from peers who seem to have managed the activity better.
- Student has another go based on the feedback from peers.

sment and
further learning
- Teacher talks through their assessment process by comparing the success criteria with the student's efforts:
  - 'You held the balloon with the uninflated end pointing away from you so that as you squeezed the balloon to make parts of the dog the squeezed air had somewhere to go. Good. That is exactly right. But now, as you squeeze and twist you need to stretch the balloon a bit more, like this. Okay?'

es of learning and teaching occur ₀ . . then

ction
- Teacher reviews the lesson with the students and asks them how they found it in terms of
  - their overall interest in and engagement with the lesson;
  - what the main teaching points were that they needed to pay most attention to;
  - progress with learning content; understanding the tricky bits, the bits that need going over again, etc;
  - satisfaction with lesson process; what worked, what didn't, how the learning partnership worked;
  - the big picture in terms of where they should go next with further learning.
- Students are asked to reflect in ways that are suitable to the lesson process and intended learnings, with an emphasis on 'active' reflection; they might be asked to
  - explain to their peers the main points about balloon-dog making;
  - write the process down and to check it with a neighbour;
  - have a brief class discussion about the process;

Student reaction/thinking

- 'This sounds reasonable enough. I can be patient so that all the other kids can see the demo, but I reckon I am on top of it.'

- 'My chance to have a go!'
- 'This is not this easy. I thought I had it sussed but doing it is not the same as thinking about doing it.'

- 'That is really interesting — my friend managed to do it better. She has given me some hints as to what I could try. I reckon we could all figure this out ourselves if we had time.'

- 'I like the way the teacher analyses what I am trying to do (assessment) and gives me suggestions (promotes further learning) as to how to improve. I also like that she really checks that I have found the feedback useful before she moves on to the next student.'

'I like the opportunity to reflect on and review my learning and to listen to how the teacher and the other students found it. I find that it deepens my understanding of what I learnt and it gives me a chance to put my own experience of the lesson into context and actually consolidate my understanding of the trickier bits as I talk or write about it and I hear other students talk about it. I can work out what I need to really focus on or practise next time.'

'It also nicely rounds the lesson off and sets it up for next time; it makes me, the learner, feel central to all that happened because it is me, the learner, that is doing the reflection.'

pire learning through a passion for the subject.

ike individual learners active partners in their learning.

velop learning skills in the learners.

ild disagree with this list? It makes sense. It has an obvious face-value to it. And it
rprise anyone that this list is distilled from the extensive research into effective teaching.
ow do you make your classroom one in which all of these characteristics are present?
. *in the Classroom* is designed to help teachers to be able to create conditions for
onsistent with all of these principles. The book has been written as a response to
ons with classroom teachers as they have worked with us to grow their capability to
tive assessment strategies. We find teachers continually grapple with 'How can I best
:arning needs of my students?', and 'Where do I find the time to do all that is expected
irder to do this?', and 'How do I get my students to be interested in learning?' We
book to give straightforward and applicable answers to these questions. It is intended
ly accessible resource for busy teachers who wish to understand and implement the
ch-based concepts that underpin assessment for learning and effective teaching.

e assessment and organisational psychology

for the ideas described in the book is sourced from two separate and significant
. The first comes from the formative assessment literature and the second is from
isational psychology literature into interpersonal effectiveness.

search into formative assessment has been compelling in helping so many teachers
the strategies and techniques they use in their classrooms. Black & Wiliam (1998)
native assessment as:

icess used by teachers and students to recognise and respond to student learning in order to
: that learning, during the learning.'

iition recognises the students as central participants in the teaching/learning
:. We see this as critical.

ient for learning involves using assessment in the classroom to raise pupils' achievement. It is
i the idea that pupils will improve most if they understand the aim of their learning, where they
lation to this aim and how they can achieve the aim (or close the gap in their knowledge).'

itive assessment literature is where our thinking began and this origin can be seen
: of this book. The core strategies most commonly described in this literature now
asis of most descriptions of good teaching and have caused a transformation in the
ip between teacher and student. For example, Black & Wiliam, in their seminal
n in 1998, *Inside the Black Box,* identify five key factors that improve learning

1. Recognition of the profound influence the motivation and self-esteem of learners have on learning.
2. Active involvement of learners in identifying learning goals and criteria for knowing when these are achieved.
3. Adjustment of teaching to take account of the results of assessment.
4. Provision of effective, timely feedback to learners.
5. Support for learners to be able to assess themselves, reflect on their learning and to understand how to improve.

However, by itself, this literature amounts to a set of valuable approaches and techniques about how to teach and about how to learn; it lacks an adequate underpinning theory of learning within the context of a teaching/learning relationship.

Teaching is about relationship management as much as it is about anything else and guidance is needed about how to ensure that that relationship is conducive to learning. A theory about learning-oriented relationships can provide structure and coherence — a philosophy, a direction — that provides teachers with a set of rules for when to use particular strategies and techniques within the context of such a relationship. To meet this need we turned to literature on increasing professional effectiveness, in particular the work of Argyris & Schön (1974). Their work is based on an examination of human action in social systems, particularly professional organisations. They have developed a theory of learning that describes the conditions necessary for increasing the capacity of all people to learn, and in particular, how to learn to build relationships through identifying and solving relationship problems that would otherwise sink the relationship or cause it to become ineffective. A theory of learning that improves the capacity of teachers and learners to nurture the quality of the relationship, as well as the quality of the actual (curriculum) learning, provides a solid platform on which to build practical classroom-based formative assessment strategies and techniques. That the two literatures sit comfortably with one another can be seen from the following two quotes. The first is from Royce Sadler (1989) who describes the process of formative assessment as one in which:

' . . . the learner has to (a) possess a concept of the standard (or goal/reference level) being aimed
for, (b) compare the actual (or current) level of performance with the standard, and (c) engage in
appropriate action which leads to some closure of the gap.' (p. 121)

The second is from Argyris & Schön in an introduction to their 1974 book:

'We identified two outcomes of learning: first, creating a match between intentions and effect. . . . and
second, detecting and correcting a mismatch. In both cases, the criteria for learning include not only the
framing of an idea or design but also its implementation. How do you know when you know something
– when you can produce what you say you know?'

Both literatures are about the nature of learning, about the nature of *inquiry.* Learning is

y of propositions, and creating the conditions to make informed choices that reduce
etween where the learner is and where the learner wants to be.
ive used these two literatures to build a comprehensive approach to describing what
chers and students need to be able to know and do in order to maximise student
This description is shaped as an integrated set of principles, strategies and techniques
into two parallel sets of six capabilities; one for teachers, one for students.
efine a capability as the ability to meet demands or carry out a task successfully. It
of cognitive and non-cognitive dimensions. A capability has an internal structure
des knowledge, cognitive skills, practical skills, attitudes, emotions, values, ethics
vation. We like to think of each capability as a tidy package of principles, knowledge,
understandings, which teachers and learners progressively develop to deeper and
vels of understanding throughout their careers and lives.
e each set of six capabilities linked together and configured as an arch that supports
cts learning. (See Figure 1 on page 24.)

rchway of teaching and learning capabilities

used a stone archway as a metaphor for the capabilities needed in teaching and
because of the inherent strength of the arch structure. In architecture, an arch is a
ructure used as a support over an open space, as in a doorway or room, usually
m cut stone blocks forming interlocking wedges. When it is well constructed it
itself; it is a protective structure. Whatever is within the arch is shielded from the
- and can therefore get on with its business — in this case teaching and learning.
two fundamental parts to the archway; the foundation and the keystone.

ty one: building a learning-focused relationship

ay is a solid structure and needs a solid foundation. Teaching and learning is
n the quality of the relationship built between teacher and student. This relationship
ndation for learning upon which all else rests. The teacher must know how to
e motivational climate of the classroom, and how to foster and build a learning-
lationship with students, so that students have optimal opportunity to build their
vation to learn. To play their part in this relationship, students themselves need to
ertain capabilities. The greater their possession of these capabilities, the richer the
elationship will be, and the more effective the learning.

ty two: clarity about what is to be learnt

of the arch is the keystone which closes the arch and locks the entire structure
Without the keystone the arch will collapse, irrespective of the quality of the
n and of the other blocks. The keystone represents clarity about what is to be
less both teacher and student are clear about what is to be learnt, why it is to
and how it is to be learnt, then teaching and learning will collapse.
ition to these two key components there are four other major blocks in the

Capability three: assessment for learning

Assessment for learning is about the understandings and strategies students and teachers need
in order to

- involve students richly in the assessment of their learning;
- be able to gather dependable information about the status of a student's (or group of students') learning;
- share this information and co-construct the implications for the current learning status and what might be learnt next;
- gather and aggregate information dependably about the needs of groups of students;
- skilfully interpret and evaluate information for individuals and groups of students in order to decide on what might be done next to support learning;
- know how to build students' self- and peer-assessment strategies;
- contribute evidence to partnerships of learning (parents, colleagues, boards, etc).

Capability four: promoting further learning

Promoting further learning is about the strategies and techniques used to close the gap
between the current state of learning and the current desired goal. It naturally follows on
from assessment; it is what you do once you have assessed.
There are five different strategies that promote further learning:

1. **Explanation:** where either a new explanation of a phenomenon is given, or additional information is provided.
2. **Feedback:** to focus attention on aspects or features of the learning context, to increase the salience of those features, to reduce the gap; this can be given as statements or questions — verbal or non-verbal — and uses modelling, exemplars, reminders and scaffolding.
3. **Learning conversation:** where a concept or argument is examined through extended discussion where both learner and teacher are equal participants; this encourages participants to reflect and think independently and critically, so that self-confidence in one's own thinking is enhanced.
4. **Reinforcement:** where affirmation is given for any closing or narrowing of the gap in a way that is appropriate for the learner (may be extrinsic, more likely to be intrinsic).
5. **Feedforward:** where pointing to the next learning steps illuminates aspects of current performance.

Both students and teachers need to develop skills in using the strategies. Students also have
to develop the skill of prompting teachers when they need help, or when the strategy the
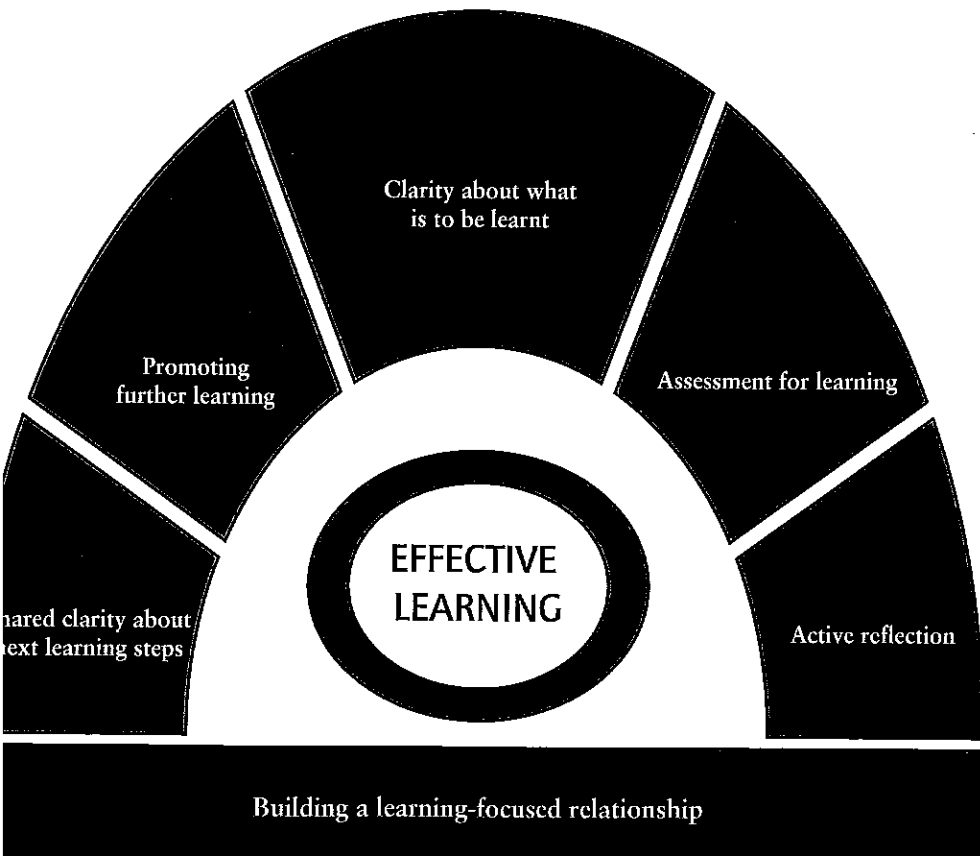teacher used didn't work for them.

Capability five: active reflection

Both teaching and learning are more effective when teacher and student take time to think
about, review and enhance the learning process, and when the learner reviews and rehearses

ability six: clarity about next learning steps

g clear about the possible next learning steps is critical for any teacher serious about co-
structing deep learning experiences with students. This is dependent on the teacher having
ep knowledge of the subject and a good understanding of the progressions of learning
in that. Teachers then need to be able to expose this subject knowledge to students and
ble them to be co-collaborators in constructing their next learning step.

archway

book is about these capabilities; what they are, how they are applied, and what results
can expect when you apply them to the classroom.

As our understanding of formative assessment has grown, we have come to see that emphasis
to be placed on enabling the learner to be active in every aspect of the teaching/learning
ess. Teaching is only about motivating and supporting the student to make considered and
ctive decisions about his or her learning. The learner is at the heart of it all.

Figure 1: Archway of teaching and learning capabilities

Clarity about what
is to be learnt

Assessment for learning

Promoting
further learning

Active reflection

EFFECTIVE
LEARNING

hared clarity about
ext learning steps

Building a learning-focused relationship

TRY·THIS!
— within the first week with your new class

Tell your students that you want a class in which each and every one of them is going
to learn and feel like a learner all year. You want everyone to learn what it means to
learn, and to be a learner, so that everyone can learn all year.

Tell them that for this to happen all of them need to explore what it means to learn and
come up with a joint understanding of what this means for them and for you — together
you need to unpack the idea of learning — to develop the success criteria for learning how
to learn. You then need to develop some activities that will assess how good everyone
(including you) is at learning, and then help them (and you) to become better learners.

Some ideas for shaping the success criteria
As a class:
- Brainstorm 'What is learning? What does it mean to be a learner?'
- Use your brainstorm to write student definitions of what learning means; combine these to write a class definition.
- Read together the dictionary definition and review what the thesaurus has to say about learning.
- Use a Y chart to discuss what students think learning looks like, sounds like and feels like.
- What gets in the way of us learning?; What are our fears about learning?; How might we overcome, and help each other overcome, these fears?
- Summarise all of the above into 4 to 6 criteria that would define a learner.
- Have everyone, including yourself, assess themselves against the criteria.
- Have everyone, working individually and in small groups, develop activities and routines that will help each individual learn to be a better learner; have each student write these up for themselves; what about an overall class action plan?
- Decide on when you are going to reassess the success of this learning plan.

Possible activities to support learning plans
- Have a class competition to come up with a learning slogan for their room; for example, in one classroom that did this, the slogan was 'learning is mission possible' and it was displayed above the whiteboard, where most new learning was introduced.
- To differentiate between playtime and learning time, have a class sign on your door; for example, Welcome to Room 11: you are now entering a learning zone. Discuss with your class what you expect to hear and see inside, compared with what would be acceptable in the playground; you may discuss the difference between a learning conversation and a conversation that might be overheard in the playground.
- On your door or written on the whiteboard may be a learning question or a thought for the day, to get the class thinking before the day begins.
- Display quotes which are related to learning and discuss what it means to them as individuals and

- Do more than just exist — live!
- Do more than just touch — feel!
- Do more than just look — see!
- Do more than just hear — listen!
- Do more than just talk — say something!
- Every piece of work is a self-portrait of the person who did it. Autograph your work with quality.

et learning goals as a class, display them and regularly reflect on them.

lave a class photo board, with photos showing learning in action pinned up or a photo album of :arning achievements.

'isplay 'bling' moments, where as a class you celebrate learning and share good practice. (Bling loments are times where individuals have exciting insights; 'blings', 'eureka' or 'ah-hah' moments bout their own learning. These are jotted on a display board and time is given to enable the :udent to talk about and celebrate the moment.)

LEARNING-FOCUSED RELATIONSHIPS
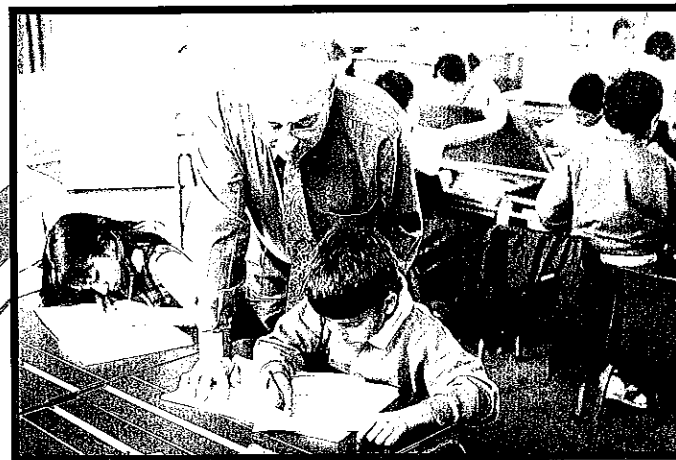
t is a learning-focused relationship?

it is

ing-focused relationship is a relationship between a teacher and a student the sole e of which is to support student learning. The student's role in the relationship is only 1. The student focuses on 'what has to happen *now* that will best help me learn?' The 's role is only to help the student learn. The teacher focuses on 'what do I need to do best help this student learn?'

:arning-focused relationship is one where *both* the student and the teacher know that king together, the quality of student learning will be much better and the standard of ment will be much higher.

one where *both* the teacher and the student *want* to work together on the learning. one where *both* the teacher and the student know *how* to work together on the 3. Picture this:

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are an outdoor education teacher taking a group of learners for their first lesson bseiling. They have all agreed to take part. Every member of the group has agreed they will abseil down the cliff at the conclusion of the lesson. None of them have e this before. Some are very anxious, not seeing themselves as outdoor types, or ing done anything like this before'. Others are more confident.

fou begin your instruction. What you immediately notice is that ALL members of the ip have given you their complete attention. Some have questions based on clarifying : understanding of what they are about to learn how to do: jump off a cliff.

is you model and describe how to attach the safety harness you can see members ing small body and hand movements that imitate the movements that you are ing as you fit your own harness. They are attending as closely as they can and are king their interpretation of what you are doing through their mental imitations.

'hen it is their turn to fit their harnesses. All of them want you to personally check they have fitted it correctly. *All* that get stuck ask for help. None are too shy in : circumstances to just stay quiet at the back. They keep asking for help and for back until they are confident that they are doing it right. Some do it correctly first . Others are very anxious and you have to take them through very small steps provide them with much assurance, as they practise, that they have got each step tly right. You move from person to person, helping them with whatever they are : with. They might want a repeat demonstration, or the demonstration broken n into sections, so that they can practise each section. Or they might want you to old in some way just the small section they cannot quite get. They also watch their ; and learn from the ones who seem to have it sussed.

ut none of them are happy to have their peers do the final check for them; they t you, the teacher, the expert, to do the final check.

'ou pause for a short time and ask them as a group how their learning is going, if are finding some bits difficult or if there are some things they would like you to

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they have got up to and there is some comment about how you have sequenced the teaching. You adjust what you do next accordingly.

When everyone has mastered attaching the safety harness you begin to describe how to manage the interplay between the ropes and the carabineer, and how to tie the knot to secure the rope. Despite what you see as the awesome clarity of your explanation, you find a number of the group quite assertively asking you to repeat your demonstration and to do it slower.

They all start trying to imitate your procedure. Many get stuck at different points and, as with the safety harness, they want your individual attention to sort it out, although they also watch their peers carefully and seek help from any that seem to have it sorted: the anxious ones doubly so. If you had provided them with diagrams that show how the knots looked, they may well have referred to them and discussed these with their peers. They each keep practising until each of them is happy that both you and they believe that they have mastered the routine as much as they possibly can before the final test of going down the cliff.

The relationship between the teacher and the students in this example *is* a learning-focused relationship; both parties are motivated to ensure high-quality learning. They know what is to be learnt and how they will know when they have learnt it. All the learners differ in their confidence about their ability to learn to abseil, and differ in their prior knowledge and experience. Both parties recognise the contribution the aggregate of these differing backgrounds makes to the whole teaching and learning experience. There is a sense of urgency and importance about the teaching and the learning. The learner is actively controlling and adjusting the learning, and the teacher is actively responsive to the learner. Both parties are reflecting on how the learning is going and adjusting the teaching and/or the learning accordingly.

Why a learning-focused relationship is so important

Research (for example, Black & Wiliam, 1998) conclusively shows that students who are active in their learning, who are motivated to learn, who manage the amount of new information they get at any one time, who practise, who seek descriptive feedback, who test their learning and reflect on their learning, learn much better than those who experience passive learning situations. Given that this is the case, then the role of the school and of the teacher is to manage the teaching/learning environment to maximise active and self-regulated learning. A foundational step in establishing this type of environment is the creation of the right type of relationship — a learning-focused relationship — with the student.

Active learners in a normal classroom

The abseiling scenario is an ideal learning situation (it is easy to get learners to listen and learn when they feel their lives are at stake), but what it does is bring into sharp relief the way strongly motivated learners are assertive about their learning and the significant expectations

ting a student, who has no option but to be at school whether they like it or not, to be as
ted and as self-regulating about learning in the classroom as the (older) students who
oted, for whatever reason, to learn to abseil, is the subject of the next chapter. But imagine
oment that you are the teacher and that you do have highly motivated students arriving
to teach this morning. What would it be like? What would their expectations be?

The first thing you would notice is an obvious keenness from the students; they
would be eager and buzzing about their expectations for learning; there would
be a slight nervousness and tension; and they would turn up on time with all the
resources they need.

They would have high expectations of your energy, commitment, knowledge and ability.

They would expect you to be very clear about what you thought they might need
to learn and why; they would expect you to have planned how the lesson and the
learning might go.

They would expect you to like them; to respect who they are as people, whatever
their background and culture.

They would expect you to be able to support them if they still needed to build
motivation or confidence.

They would expect you to support them if they still needed to learn the skills
to be self-regulating, without your attention to their special needs excessively
compromising the learning of all the other students.

They would expect you to be able to talk through your intentions for the lesson
and to be happy to negotiate changes that seemed to better meet the learning needs
of the whole class.

They would expect you to have planned to give them sufficient time to learn.

They would expect that you would establish mechanisms that would enable both
them and you to monitor learning progress so that difficulties could be identified
and changes could be made to the learning activities if this seemed warranted.

They would expect you to help them identify and celebrate significant achievement
of important learning goals.

Finally, they would want to respectfully, but assertively, raise any gap between
what they expect from you and what they perceive you are giving so that, with you,
the gap can be closed.

ble to do all of this in a learning situation as formal as compulsory schooling requires
ant motivation and skill on the part of the student. To be able to meet expectations
se from your students requires significant skill on your part; and even more skill to be
teach the learners to be assertive and respectful. But if the goal is a genuine learning-
relationship, then this is what must happen. And in the first instance it is up to the
to bring it about.

six-year-old] students had been taught last year by a teacher who had learnt to use assessment
arning strategies. When they came to me at the beginning of the year, one of the first things they

I thought they should learn those things and how it might all happen. I thought that was fantastic
because it also put me on the spot. I knew that they were not going to be satisfied with doing any old
thing. They had high expectations of me as their teacher! They wanted to learn and they expected that
I would have what it took to teach them. Fantastic!'

<div align="right">Year 2/3 Teacher</div>

'In my school this year, as teachers have engaged their students more fully in co-construction, especially
in Years 7 and 8, the kids are looking lighter, not as burdened. Get the learning right and the behaviour
will largely take care of itself.'

<div align="right">School Principal</div>

What it is not
Controlling

What gets focused on, flourishes. We want learning to flourish. It will not flourish if the
teacher focuses primarily on controlling the student. 'Being controlled' is not what abseiling
students who are desperate to be taught before they go down the cliff want or need.

In a relationship that is about power and control the teacher explicitly organises the
classroom arrangements and the teaching to minimise the ability of students to exercise any
agency (decision-making power) about their learning without the express permission of the
teacher. Classrooms used to be very clearly about the teacher controlling the students and
the learning. Learning in a classroom was seen as, essentially, an activity in which the role of
the student was to passively and obediently receive the wisdom and knowledge of the teacher.
We can have sympathy for this approach in classrooms, no physically bigger than today's,
when they held 60 students or more and many of the students did not conform to the
comparatively gentle school social norms of today. Playground fights were a regular part of
playtime entertainment, and corporal punishment was just a part of the culture.

A teacher who believes that students need to be controlled limits the extent to which a
deep and rich learning relationship can be developed with students. Even when the teacher
only controls the classroom organisation so that learning can occur efficiently, there is a
reduction in the motivation and capacity of the students to learn. Why? Because the most
effective and intense learning relationship comes from the circumstance where both student
and teacher share the construction of the entire environment. This does not need to be
prolonged, or require both parties to endure endless discussion. The teacher should offer an
initial structure, sequence and process, but should also offer genuine opportunities for the
students to renegotiate any of it if they have good reason, in terms of its suitability, for their
learning. All limitations that the teacher imposes on what can be co-constructed reduces the
efficacy of the learning relationship and increases the extent to which the student experiences
any learning that occurs as a reactive and passive process.

A controlling relationship can be established in very subtle ways. For example, research
(Delpit, 1988) shows that teachers can act to exercise power in ways that are very subtle,
and confuse students rather than helping them to understand the processes of learning and
the different learning-oriented roles within the classroom. Often (controlling) teachers

ample, teachers might say things like, 'would you like to sit on the mat?' when it be far clearer to use the directive, 'come and sit on the mat' which is what the teacher the students to do and is entitled to tell them to do. By expressing themself indirectly, cher is suggesting that the students have a choice, and therefore have agency with to that choice, when in fact they don't. The teacher knows that there is no choice, but ; suggested to the students that there is. Therefore they know less about the situation ie does, which puts her in the (controlling) position of being able to unilaterally judge hey do.

Question: How do you know that you do *not* have a learning-focused relationship with a student?

Answer: When you demand of a child, 'Where are your manners, boy?' and the answer comes back, 'Up there on the wall, Miss.' (Pointing to a laminated poster.)

Not only do you have a controlling relationship in which you exercise control through playing the game of 'guess what is in my head so that I can tell you whether you are right or wrong', but you have not taught the boy an understanding at all of what you mean by manners.

The two left-hand columns in Table 2 below show how the differences between a controlling perspective and a learning-focused perspective of a student might look. Allan's parents have drug addictions and there is some history of violence towards the children.

Caring

What gets focused on, flourishes. We want learning to flourish. It will not flourish if the teacher focuses primarily on the care of the student. Caring is not the purpose of the relationship. Of course, there is absolutely nothing wrong with caring for your students. For some students, the teacher may well be the only person that *does* care for them and that relationship may be highly valued by the student, but it is quite different from teaching them. Caring is not what is wanted by abseiling students who are about go down the cliff for the first time.

To teach you don't *have* to care for your students; you do *have* to care for their learning. To care for their learning you do have to respect them as people, and respect their capacity to learn. There is a big difference between respect for a person and caring for a person. When you genuinely respect someone as a (young) person you simply offer them exactly what you would want them to offer you: a reciprocal, mutual, deep sense of equality in your 'personness'. You want to think as well of them as you would want them to think of you. By consistently offering this respect you also build their capacity for self-respect and esteem.

TABLE 2: DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE THAT TEACHERS CAN HOLD OF A STUDENT			
1. Controlling perspective	**2. Learning-focused perspective**	**3. Caring perspective**	**4. Activity-focused perspective**
The teacher sees Allan as someone	The teacher sees Allan as someone	The teacher sees Allan as someone	The teacher sees Allan as someone
o has to learn to do what he is told, when he is d; he doesn't know how to behave;	• who has more to learn than many of his peers about how to be a focused learner in a classroom. (If he is to learn these things they must become an explicit priority of his learning agenda with regular monitoring by the teacher and Allan of his progress. The teacher may need upskilling in how to teach Allan some of these things.);	• who has huge learning needs but has so many barriers to his learning because of his home circumstances;	• who finds it very hard to settle;
o has little interest in learning;	• who will be interested in learning if compelling ways to show him 'what's in it for him' can be found, and if he has success at learning things that do matter to him;	• who you have to tiptoe around so that he does not get upset. He is often not on task and doesn't complete work. Not too much can be expected because of how he is: 'Hopefully he will improve in time if I am patient with him and affirm him, as much as possible.';	• who has a short attention span and needs to be kept engaged in activities; • who needs activities that he can enjoy and that keep changing in some way so that he does not get bored;
		• who needs opportunities to talk about what has upset him and why he gets angry;	• for whom the tasks usually need to involve gross motor and manipulation: he is not too good with fine motor or cognitive tasks;
o has tantrums and angry outbursts which are very ruptive for the rest of the class and they need to be naged firmly;	• whose tantrums and anger outbursts are something he needs to be taught strategies to monitor, manage and eliminate in a classroom;	• who has tantrums and outbursts which are evidence of how needy he is; • who seldom does homework because it is too difficult	• whose tantrums and outbursts are evidence of how needy he is;

E 2 continued:

1. Controlling perspective	2. Learning-focused perspective	3. Caring perspective	4. Activity-focused perspective
The teacher sees Allan as someone	The teacher sees Allan as someone	The teacher sees Allan as someone	The teacher sees Allan as someone
• it is good to get out of the classroom at times ause he can be a nuisance in it, make the rest of class harder to manage, and disrupts the learning he rest of them;	• who cannot afford to spend any more time than any of his peers in the playground, helping the caretaker, running messages or sitting outside the principal's office unless these are used as learning opportunities;	• who needs extra time in the playground to 'let off steam';	• who needs extra time in the playground to 'let off steam';
• needs firmness and consistency to keep him in line; , when he is taught, needs to listen, and do as he ld;	• who needs firmness and consistency when helping him learn how to behave in the classroom in ways that are consistent with being an active learner;		
• ut whom they know what he needs to learn;	• about whom they know what he needs to learn but can't be sure that it is actually right for him until it has been discussed;		
• you can only give as much choice as he is able of exercising responsibly;	• who needs them to be very clear about their role in the learning relationship, and to help him find his role and learn to be comfortable with his role as learner;		
	• who wants to make choices about his learning. They have to co-construct his learning pathway together so that they are both confident it will work for him, and they have to revise it often as his needs change;		
• some days is a complete disaster, right from the he arrives;	• who, when he arrives in an emotional storm at the beginning of the day, sometimes has to be helped to learn strategies to put it to one side so that he can focus on learning;	• who some days is so upset from home that he is better off helping the caretaker because then, at least, he is not causing trouble;	• who some days is so upset from home that he is better off helping the caretaker because then, at least, he is not causing trouble;
• m other children are expected to tiptoe around. he can be a disruptive influence on them as well;	• whom other children are expected to 'use' as a source of information and feedback about their own learning, and to provide with feedback about his own, including modelling of appropriate classroom behaviour;	• whom other children are expected to tiptoe around to try not to upset him, but also include him as much as possible;	• whom other children are expected to tiptoe around to try not to upset him but also include him as much as possible;
• vhom the expectation is, unfortunately, that he turn out like his older family members;	• for whom the expectation is that he will learn to be a learning-focused member of the class and will learn as much of the curriculum as any of his peers and that, if anything, it is even more important that he does so;	• for whom the expectation is, unfortunately, that he will most likely turn out like his older family members;	
• could learn if he would sit still, do as he was told, listen.	• with low self-esteem that will rise as he learns, begins to experience success, and be able to affirm himself as a learner.	• with low self-esteem who needs opportunities to build this before he can really be a learner. His self-esteem can be strengthened by affirming who he is and through strengthening his cultural identity through cultural music/dance practices and activities.	• with low self-esteem who needs opportunities to build this before he can really be a learner. His self-esteem can be strengthened by giving him tasks that he can succeed at.

the other hand, if you 'care' for them you tend to see yourself as having some advantage
hem in life circumstances (which may be true), and as offering them some (loco-parental)
rt to enable them to overcome their disadvantage, their deficit. There is nothing
arily wrong with this, but it is not respect for their essential 'equalness' and it does not
le the best basis for supporting them with their learning. It can undermine learning. In
ning-focused relationship, nothing gets in the way. The teacher does not focus on the
it's socioeconomic or ethnic background or circumstances if it is not directly important
e learning at hand.
lumns 2 and 3 in Table 2 on pages 32–35 show how the differences might look between
ig perspective and a learning-focused perspective for our student, Allan.

ity-focused

gets focused on, flourishes. We want learning to flourish. It will not flourish if the
r focuses primarily on providing tasks and activities designed to hook the students in;
iey will enjoy. The purpose of the classroom is not to entertain the students, although
ig is not incompatible with enjoyment. It does not matter how orthodox the reading
imme might be, how much it conforms to a 'balanced programme' recommended by
erature and approved by senior staff. It doesn't matter if the physical education
imme is really enjoyed by students who participate enthusiastically. It doesn't matter if
idents can't wait to get to school in order to spend time on the computers. It doesn't
if the health unit is delivered by external facilitators each year because the students
enjoy it. School is not primarily about what students do or enjoy. Unless both the
r and the students clearly understand and can state what the intended learning is, and
uish this from the tasks and activities, the activities are of limited value and over time
the likelihood that students will continue to value school.
in activity-based relationship both teacher and student are focused on *doing* work.
nguage of the classroom is the language of work, activity and entertainment: 'What
doing today? Have you *done* your writing yet? Sit down and *do* your work. Think
Allan. Try harder, Cheryl. You will find that this is a fun activity once you give it a
:x. Let's see if we can all have a really enjoyable day today. Have you finished your
?eet?'
activity-focused relationship is very hard work for the teacher and is one-sided. The
is the one who has to design or supply the activity to the design criteria set by the
s. The student's role is to engage with the activity to the extent to which they enjoy it.
judge it to be not to their liking, they do not engage. Motivation is based on enjoyment
velty. It is up to the teacher to provide the entertainment. A good teacher is a superb
iner.
umns 2 and 4 in Table 2 show how the differences might look between an activity-
l perspective and a learning-focused perspective, for our student, Allan.

essage from the research literature

education, we are developing a considerable body of well-researched knowledge

We are becoming
- more interested in raising achievement levels for all students;
- less tolerant or expecting of failure of any student, more accepting of an accountability link between student achievement and the quality of teaching;
- more clearly research-driven in shaping further pedagogical improvement.

All of this, in fact, amounts to a revolution in education. Along with this revolution, largely as a consequence of the impact of the research (Alton-Lee, 2003), there has been a major transformation in the professional beliefs about the nature of effective teaching and learning, and the nature of the relationship between teacher and student. Table 3 (below and overleaf) demonstrates these shifts. The shift is away from either a caring or a controlling relationship towards one that is learning-focused and mutually respectful.

Table 3: Adapted from Alton-Lee, 2005

TABLE 3: SHIFTS TOWARDS TEACHING BASED ON LEARNING-FOCUSED RELATIONSHIPS

Historical beliefs	Emerging beliefs
teaching is a craft practice (each teacher rediscovers the wheel as they develop their craft knowledge);	emphasis on evidence-based approach (valid information) that attends to data about student learning and effective pedagogy to inform professional teaching practice;
teaching is a common-sense endeavour that involves transmission of content/skills;	professionalism of pedagogy derived from solid and growing research and theory base;
the learner is a sponge to soak up knowledge or a bucket to be filled;	the learner is a knowledge constructor within a community of learners;
teachers have low ability to significantly support learning of students with socioeconomic disadvantage;	teachers have significant ability to support learning of students with socioeconomic disadvantage (teacher agency accounts for at least 42 per cent of variance in scores in available NZ evidence);
learning depends on readiness of learners;	teacher's ability to build on learners' prior experiences and scaffold effective learning opportunities is crucial;
teacher as facilitator; relatively shallow understanding of some content/subject matter;	teacher has deep understanding of content/ subject matter taught and purposes for teaching;
good teaching is teaching that results in busy, happy classrooms (teacher feel-good factor);	good teaching is teaching that has a positive impact on diverse students' achievement and well-being;

Left (from)		Right (to)
eacher is caring, this is enough to ensure ive outcomes.	→	caring must be about the learning – teacher must respect students and build respect amongst student community – but must also care about effective teaching (evidence shows negative impacts on learners via deeply caring teachers with low expectations of students).
gnising socially-situated reality of students		
re and socio-economic context of student not ant or is invisible;	→	recognition of student as socially situated is integral to effectiveness of teaching and learning;
on social well-being and cultural identity uch to ask given size of other teaching nsibilities;	→	social well-being, cultural identity and health of the peer culture shaped through everyday educational practices; teachers must do this intentionally and knowledgeably through effective pedagogy;
emic focus – social incidental, teacher nsibility and accountability for academic	→	academic, cultural and social inextricably intertwined; teacher responsibility and accountability in all three.
onsive pedagogy		
ilinary and compliance focus to classroom igement;	→	learning and self-regulation focus to classroom management;
ng dependent on teacher's ability to teach individual child;	→	learning dependent on teacher enabling students to be self-motivated and self-regulating learners;
asis on the teacher and the child and ing without differentiation to needs of ular learners;	→	highly responsive to diverse needs of learners in different curricular areas in different contexts;
continuity between teaching approaches for rs of different ages in different curricular	→	generic principles of quality teaching across all ages and curricular areas in tension with subject-specific pedagogical approaches;
on teacher's responsibility for curriculum ige with respect to specific academic ives;	→	focus both on teacher's curriculum coverage with respect to what is actually learnt and ability to structure a learning environment and design effective learning tasks;
rs infer student engagement from student iour.	→	teachers use systematic strategies to reveal, understand and be responsive to students' thinking and metacognitive strategies.
f peers		
ulture seen as a (negative) force	→	

Left (from)		Right (to)
overt classroom 'culture of niceness'; peers reluctant to challenge or contradict, hidden peer conflict.	→	learners empowered to allow cognitive conflict to flourish and to develop skills to use cognitive conflict to support learning.
Role of assessment		
assessment is prerogative of teacher;	→	assessment becomes a collaborative activity between student and teacher, includes student self-assessment and peer-assessment as students take increasing responsibility for own learning and become more autonomous with respect to own learning;
assessment disconnected from teaching and learning; emphasis on evaluative assessment;	→	predominant use of assessment practices that are diagnostic, descriptive, formative, designed to improve learning;
assessment information not available in a form that is useful for informing teaching.	→	aggregation and disaggregation of assessment data purposeful to improve teaching for diverse learners.
Role of parents		
teacher has little agency in parental support for learning.	→	teacher agency critical in enabling parents to support learning.

In total, these changing beliefs about what it is to teach and what it is to learn illustrate the shift from a teacher-student relationship, where learning is seen as an essentially receptive exercise by the student and where the teacher creates the conditions for greatest receptivity by the most students — quiet, attentive classrooms — to one where the relationship is defined and refined by the results of research into what works best; where students are active partners in co-constructing the entire teaching/learning endeavour.

In a learning-focused relationship, the express intention of the teacher is to support and teach students to exercise as much agency as the teacher within the teaching/learning context. In other words, the intention is to create a classroom in which there is no power differential between teacher and students, where both have equal agency and the locus of control is jointly maintained so that the learner is able to maximise his/her ability to regulate his/her own learning; to be an active learner.

The teacher is not a student! Keeping the difference clear

These changes in belief, of what teaching and learning is about, should not be taken to suggest that there is a shift towards both teachers and students having the same rights and responsibilities. Co-construction of, and concurrence about, the teaching/learning process does not mean equal roles and responsibilities, or that teachers have given up any responsibilities.

Teachers still have responsibility to

be highly knowledgeable about their subject area;

have responsibility to arrange for highly effective learning opportunities and tasks;

model appropriate relationship principles and strategies;

monitor and support student motivation for learning;

guide students' development of relationship strategies and abilities;

arrange for dependable assessment opportunities; (Note: Dependable assessment is assessment that has sufficient degrees of validity and reliability to usefully inform the judgements that need to be made. Assessments used entirely within one class, where any one result can be triangulated with other information about what a student knows, can be less technically reliable than an assessment in which the results will be used to make judgements about school-wide trends, where it is critical to have good inter-teacher reliability; for example, in the way reading ages are assessed between classes.);

monitor and manage class engagement with learning.

it is not appropriate for teachers to be tentative and hesitant about these legitimate
The clearer and more direct they are about them, the easier it is for students to also
tand how their roles are differentiated from that of the teacher.

sort of relationship have you got with your students?

s simple test with your students. Ask your students to anonymously complete the
on the opposite page, or some of it; or use it as a basis for a discussion with your
s about the nature of teaching. Or reword it to suit the age of your students.

: with them about what the results mean to you: how you feel, what you are thinking
g as a result. See what they say. Look for patterns in the results. One teacher who
is found that one group of students saw her as controlling and another group as
On 'average' she *appeared* to have a learning-focused relationship. It was only
he looked closely at the results that she discovered she was seen as controlling by
up and caring by another! She found this fascinating and a rich source of information
re discussions with her Year 5 class. Beware of simple interpretations.

n a learning-focused relationship is present in classrooms the following examples are
s of things students and teachers do say.

students and teachers see it

ent: 'I'm the one who does the learning. Not my teacher. My teacher is there to
ain things to me, to help me to keep challenged, to keep me going in the right
:tion, and learning at the right pace. Together, and with the others in the class,
vork out what I am going to learn and why. My teacher knows her stuff; she
top of the subjects we learn with her, can tell us why it is important for us to
it, and is skilled at explaining stuff to us and in then supporting us as we try
iderstand it. We let her know when we get stuck or puzzled by things and she
ways of getting us unstuck! Everything we do is focused on our learning. In our
, control is not an issue because everyone is there for learning. We haven't got

---

Circle the answer that you think best fits what happens in our class

1.	Who decides what you are going to learn?	Your teacher	You	Both of you
2.	Who has the responsibility to make sure you learn?	Your teacher	You	Both of you

3. Should naughty children be
     given a big hug because they must be sad to have misbehaved?
     punished for being naughty?
     asked what they need help to learn so that they become good learners?

4. Circle the words that best describe your learning at school:
     hard and fun;
     hard and boring;
     just right;
     easy and fun;
     easy and boring.

5. Do you think learning at school should be mostly
     hard and fun?
     hard and boring?
     not too hard and not too boring: just right?
     easy and fun?
     easy and boring?

6. Do you generally know what you are learning at school:
     always?
     sometimes?
     hardly ever: no one ever tells you, they just get you to do things?

7. For most things you are asked to learn at school, do you
     already know them and have to learn them again?
     still not know them by the end of the lesson or unit?
     learn them by the end of the lesson or unit?

8. When you find something hard to learn, does your teacher help you get over that hard part:
     hardly ever?
     some of the time?
     almost all of the time?

9. What does your teacher believe about you:
     dumb and can't learn?
     dumb but can learn if you try?
     that you are a learner?

10. Is your teacher mostly someone who
     is a nice, kind person?
     will help you learn?
     will keep the class quiet and busy?

11. Does your teacher mainly make you feel
     proud of who you are?
     ashamed of who you are?

12. Does your teacher worry more about
     making you feel good?

Teacher 1: 'My job is to keep the students profoundly motivated and challenged with their learning. The students who join the class during the year often need to learn how to take charge of their own learning before they can really start to make good progress. To do this they need to know what values they need in order to drive positive learning. They need to learn how to be clear about what it is they are intending to learn, how to actually do the learning, how to assess their progress, how to enlist support from their peers, parents and me, and how to assess and modify when appropriate the quality of the learning process. It is my job to make sure that every student in my class learns these values and understandings.

'Students need to know that positive learning is based on genuine respect for themselves, those around them, and what it is they are intending to learn. This respect is seen by the openness with which they ask about things that concern or puzzle them, and the mindfulness they have towards the needs of others.'

Teacher 2: 'Never before have I thought about students needing to be on board. We said it, but we didn't allow them to have the ownership. I was negative at the beginning of the professional development]: who's going to teach me about learning? I used to be a principal! I thought, "I'm going to get exposed." I read everything and did stuff because you [the facilitator] were coming, then I saw the kids coming on board. I saw the kids wanting to have discussions about learning. Now they come to me and I'm relaxed and we're in a partnership.'

Teacher 3: 'What more can I learn after 18 years? It's [assessment for learning professional development] been the greatest, most exciting, tiring learning of my whole career. It made me reflect so much on my own teaching practices. It has strengthened the relationship I have with my students; we're all learning. The students and I have an equal partnership in the learning.'

Student: 'We used to be little ratbags. We used to fight with each other for incredible reasons; like when Sione gave me a look that I didn't like I used to get really, really upset and want to punch him. It took me quite a while to learn that I am in charge of what I do and that I choose whether to get upset by how other people look at me, what they say to me, or what they do to me. With Sione now, I don't mind at all how he looks at me. If he gives me a look I don't like, I ignore it. If he has some problem with what I have done or not done, he needs to tell me what it is, why it upsets him, what he expects me to do, why, and then ask me what I think about all of that.

Sione has grown up too, so he is also now much more in charge of his behaviour and does not mind the distractions of others so much. He is more confident of himself, sure of who he is, confident that he is safe at school and he is respected here. He doesn't need to act tough at school. We have all learnt how to be in order to show each other respect, how to be mindful of each other, how to support each other and without making it worse. We go and sit in time-out until we feel calm and then we go and either talk with the teacher or one of the peer mediators. We see how our teacher is with us and we try to be like her.'

Learning-focused relationships and trends in society

The quality of the relationship between teacher and student is the key to the successfulness of the teaching. Nobody wants to learn from someone who doesn't like them or who doesn't want to teach. Nobody wants to teach someone who doesn't like them or who doesn't want to learn. If the relationship is not right, the learning is slow, at best. All too often teachers, at every level, find themselves obliged to work with students who don't want to be there, who don't want to learn. All too often it is difficult to work out how to engage with a student who doesn't appear to like you and who obviously doesn't want to learn. If you can't solve this, you know that little learning will ever take place in your class with that student. Your best chance of solving it is to use strategies that the research tells us are our best bet at building a learning-focused relationship.

Learning-focused relationships are about using the considerable potential in the relationship between teacher and student to maximise the student's engagement with learning; about enabling the student to play a meaningful role in deciding what to learn and how to learn it; and about enabling the student to become a confident, resilient, active, self-regulating learner.

Western democratic societies and their education systems have been changing markedly over the last 30 or so years, shaping more and more adequate understandings of social participation where concepts such as equality of participation, co-construction, collaboration and inclusiveness are highly valued. These concepts apply to all citizens and in all political, social, family, organisational and educational contexts.

Schooling is no exception. We now eschew hierarchy and place, in all situations not related to legitimate task or organisational performance. We want to be respected as people, not for our title, rank, class, culture or wealth. This sense of equality and respect pervades most schools and classrooms. The more we, as a society, come to understand what it means to have a right to agency as an individual, what it means to actually have agency (and what it means not to have agency), what it means to be genuine initiators of social meaning-making (and to be recipients of others' initiations), the more we understand how we want schools to be and how we want the learning within those schools to be.

The more we understand of this, the more we also understand what schools need to teach students about how to be in society, so that they themselves come to have legitimate agency and be active, positive participants in democratic society. Learning-focused relationships are in fact models of the participatory relationships needed to sustain democratic citizenship.

characteristics of teachers and students
are in a learning-focused relationship

abseiling example earlier (see page 28) is analysed, the ways in which both teacher and
its act — what they bring to the relationship — can be characterised under a number
idings. (See Table 4 below and overleaf.) If you were the student learning to abseil,
l this capture how you might feel and act? If you were the teacher, would this capture
ou might feel and act?

student	The teacher
TABLE 4: DEFINING A LEARNING-FOCUSED RELATIONSHIP	

ated

strongly motivated to learn and gets even
ore motivated as success with the learning is
perienced;
able to manage their anxiety and/or stress and
otivation so that readiness to learn is optimal.

Motivated

- is motivated to enable all the students to achieve the learning in the time allowed;
- believes that all the students are capable of achieving;
- is able to manage their stress and motivation so that teaching is optimal;
- supports students so that their stress/anxiety/ motivation is optimal.

iorative

ws the 'lesson' as a collaborative exercise
tween self and teacher in which the purpose of
e relationship is to learn;
irks with the teacher to build the motivation of
e teacher to teach: thanks them, shows pleasure
progress made, at the skill of the teacher in
iding the learning.

Collaborative

- views the 'lesson' as a collaborative exercise between self and students in which the purpose of the relationship is to enable the students to learn and that all that they do must advance this and be seen by the students to advance this;
- works with the student to build the motivation of the student to learn; checks with the student that they are experiencing success, helps them overcome difficult bits, boosts motivation by rewarding success, by introducing a range of motivational devices: jokes, interesting examples and illustrations of points.

:tful of self

:s self as a learner and as someone who is
axed about advocating for own needs when
cessary (such as asking other students to be
iet so that they can hear the teacher, or asking
: teacher to explain a point again).

Respectful of self

- sees self as a learner and as someone who is relaxed about advocating for own needs when necessary (such as asking students to be quiet so that they can talk with them).

Respectful of teacher

- is willing to learn from the teacher;
- respects the expertise of the teacher and believes that the teacher can teach;
- uses the teacher to confirm that the learning has been mastered: provides the final assessment or check.

Clarity about what is to be learnt

- knows what is to be learnt and knows what they will be able to do when the learning is achieved;
- is very conscious of the need to complete the learning in the time allowed for the learning and therefore does not want any distractions; very focused on the learning.

Self-regulating

- Is able to regulate their own learning
  - to manage the pace of learning to fit with the time allowed; accepts that sometimes it will be rather pressured, but that is how it is;
  - to have the teacher break the learning into manageable bits;
  - to engage in repeated opportunities to learn, through repeated explanation, modelling, practice, etc;
  - to assess the progress of the learning by com-paring their efforts against those of a model or a set of criteria or the efforts of their peers;
  - to seek teacher and peer feedback to confirm or change their own assessment;
  - to seek help and guidance about the bits that they are stuck on;
  - to be able to independently continue to practise some bits or to move on to the next bit of learning.

Respectful of student

- is respectful of the learner as a learner
  - recognises that they bring their own unique background to the learning and that they will use this background and prior knowledge to build the new learning;
- conscious of their responsibilities as a teacher to be seen by the students as the effective source of expertise and support;
- accepts the responsibility to provide the final assessment and confirmation that the student has learnt what was intended.

Clarity about what is to be learnt

- knows what is to be learnt;
- is aware of the need to achieve a tight focus on the learning; that distractions must be avoided except as a way of spacing practice attempts.

Responsive

- Is able to regulate their own teaching
  - to optimise the pace of teaching to fit with student needs and the time allowed for the learning;
  - to be able to offer multiple representations of what is to be learnt so that students are offered more than one way of coming to understand constructs or to develop skill;
  - to offer repeated opportunities to learn: through repeated explanation, modelling, practice, etc;
  - by assessing where the students are at with their learning and then modifying the intended programme;
  - on the basis of assessment to provide prompts, scaffolds, feedback as appropriate.

Reflective

- uses reflection on the learning to build a meta-cognitive map to contextualise the learning;
- uses own, peer and teacher reflection on the progress of the learning to assess effectiveness of the learning and modify accordingly.

Next steps

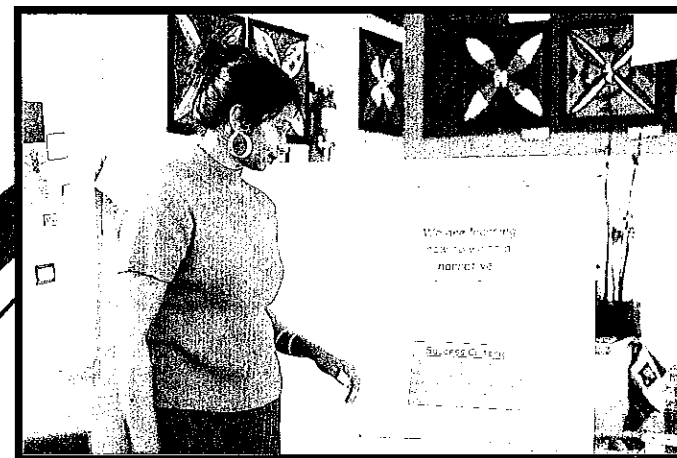- to 'use' the teacher as a resource to guide the learning.

Reflective

- uses own and student reflection on the progress of the learning to assess effectiveness of the teaching and modify teaching accordingly.

Next steps

- to remain clear about further progressions of learning and when they might be introduced.

You can see that this analysis of the abseiling lesson has been arranged to fit with the capabilities archway introduced in Chapter 1 (but using slightly different language), and how the capabilities in the archway interrelate to support learning. The foundation of the whole arch is the ability to form and sustain a learning-focused relationship, and we now turn to a close examination of the structure of this relationship.

BEING CLEAR ABOUT WHAT IS TO BE LEARNT

; so important to be clear
hat is to be learnt

e to truly have responsibility for their learning then it should go without saying that
as clear as they can be about what they are intending to learn. Paradoxically, clarity
we ever really start with but what we work towards. How can you really be clear
hing you don't know about yet? The more you know about a subject the clearer you
iat that subject really is. The more the students learn, the clearer they get.
:acher you should be very clear about what you want them to know, but they
what they don't know. Our job, as teachers, is to stay focused on the process of
, to work with them to enable them to use what they currently know, to envisage
of what they might learn next.

arification as a process also means that we need to not only spend time at the
f a lesson or unit of work clarifying what we want them to learn, why we want
rn it, and how we intend that the learning should proceed, but we also need to
to that intention over the course of the lesson. We need to repeatedly return to the
the learning and check progress: 'Are we getting there?'
ze are clear, research shows that there are a number of important shifts for the
heir motivation improves, they stay on-task, their behaviour improves, and they
pt to engage in self-regulation. In other words, they take more responsibility for
ng.

:lear about what is to be learnt

ning is essential to being clear. Doing the hard thinking that is required if you are
iow what you want your students to know is absolutely critical. There are no short
t is a necessary precursor to later co-construction. Chapter 9 describes the processes
n effective planning. That said, there are two parts to supporting a learner to
ear about what is to be learnt: naming or identifying the learning (learning
l, and describing the learning (models or exemplars and success criteria).
are two parts to a whole and you must not lose sight of the whole. Naming and
are two techniques to achieve the important overall goal of ensuring that students
about what they are learning. Use both parts flexibly and creatively so that you
iur goal. Together they need to paint the best possible picture of what is to be
: example, for some learning, for some students, words may not be the most sensible
nvey the intended learning. For very young children, for those with severe language
ords may be the most inefficient way of conveying intended learning and we might
use modelling or exemplars to carry the whole message.

j intentions

intentions describe what it is we want students to learn or what it is that students
teed to learn.

as long as you are as clear as you can be with your students. All of these terms have been used
by different writers to mean very similar things.

In recent years the terminology to describe what we want students to learn has varied
from learning objective or specific learning objective to learning intention or learning goal.
There has been an increased recognition that the actual process of learning is not always as
definite, linear and lock-step as suggested by 'specific learning objective' and the type of
knowledge implied by learners who have learnt a long list of learning objectives. It is not
always simply a matter of teaching students a large number of discrete specific learning
objectives that would, in total, add up to the national curriculum. For example, we don't
want doctors who make incisions, stitch lesions, and drain wounds successfully. We want
doctors who can do all of that, but who can carry out a complete operation on a patient
successfully and have a sense of the wholeness of their profession. What we want students to
know is not necessarily made up of lots of discrete bits. Competence at language is certainly
not. It is all a lot messier than that, and the path of learning is not linear, although there is
often a 'common' sequence of learning and progression.

So it seems better to capture descriptions of what we are wanting students to learn at any
one time as what we are 'intending' them to learn. 'Learning intentions' is perhaps the most
commonly used term at the time of writing and it is the one that you will see most often in
this book.

How Barbara-Anne explained the importance of learning intentions to her class
When introducing learning intentions to my class I realised I needed to do it in a way
which made it simple and clear. I began by asking them to imagine a dark tunnel. We
talked about what might happen if we tried to walk through the tunnel without a
torch to light our way. The students shared ideas such as we might bang into the wall,
or we could fall over, we could get lost or even start walking in the opposite direction
without even realising it.

I then explained that there have been times in my teaching where I have sent them
into a dark tunnel because I haven't made it clear to them what it is I intend them to
learn. I introduced the term *learning intention* here and explained that this was going
to be the torch in my teaching and their learning. It would help us to know we are
heading in the right direction, taking away some of the confusion and unnecessary
obstacles that could slow their progress and understanding down.

Together we broke down what a learning intention was. Students suggested words
such as our goal, aim, or the learning we hoped would take place. We also looked
into the dictionary and defined what *learning* was and what the word *intention* meant
and put them together to gain a greater understanding of the term *learning intention*.
I told them to tell me whenever they felt 'in the dark' about what they were meant to
be learning.

We talked about our learning being like a journey through the tunnel. This was
where I introduced success criteria and we likened them to signposts along the way

at we continued to travel in the right direction, not take any side tunnels, and
r way towards our intended learning destination.
 a picture of a torch was placed beside the words *learning intention* and
s beside the success criteria.

iteria — unpacking the learning
ria help students to gain a better understanding of what successful learning might look
that they can recognise from what they know now. They can either be constructed
 make salient the most important features of what is to be learnt, or so that the
understand how successful learning might be assessed, or both. For example:

g intention: we are learning to write a short, exciting, narrative.
criteria:
narrative will have an introductory paragraph and a conclusion.
narrative will sequence events.
 narrative will use the present tense to build a sense of immediacy and
ncy.

ria make salient the important features of this type of narrative. They spell out in
ail the learning intention. A short, exciting narrative of the type being studied has
res. By making them explicit, it focuses the learner on what their narratives need
, and makes explicit for both learner and teacher what both will look for and assess
eted narrative.
e helpful to separate success criteria into two types. *Process criteria* unpack the
 features of what is to be learnt or how we will go about the learning. *Product*
scribe the way in which students will know at the end of the task that they have
he learning intention.
ding on the learning intention, the important features might be of both
netimes we will want students to learn how to do or make something (process
nd also attend to the qualities of the product (product criteria). For example, in the
ntention above we have only included product success criteria. We could have also
ome criteria about how they might go about constructing the piece by suggesting

ing:
instorming of ideas and possible language features, beginning with a small
up;
lividual crafting;
ofreading.

ce lesson where the intention is shaped around developing an understanding of
, we might well want to include some process investigative criteria, as well as criteria
lectrical concepts. If we include both product and process criteria, we should also

To construct criteria of the important features of the learning requires that you, as teacher, know the subject extremely well. What teachers usually find difficult, when they first start developing success criteria, is to decide what the critical features are that they want students to pay particular attention to as they work towards the learning. It could be that they are unsure of the features, or that deciding on the features that will be of most help to students tends to cause them to rethink what is most important. This is a difficult, but very useful, process in beginning to formulate teaching as a learning-focused endeavour. Engaging in this thinking with colleagues is perhaps the most powerful way to do it. It is an excellent opportunity for teachers to share and clarify their subject understandings. For example, a discussion which leads to a shared understanding of the important features of narrative writing will ensure that all teachers are clear about this and that all students have equal opportunity to learn.

If the learner does not know what the criteria mean, such as 'sequence events', then a new learning intention, with its own success criteria that describe the important characteristics of sequence, might be shaped. For example:

Learning intention: we are learning to recognise sequence and be able to write a series of events in order when it suits our purpose as writers.
Success criteria:
- Our writing will begin with the very first thing that happened.
- Our writing will have all the events in the middle in the correct order of when things happened.
- Our writing will end with the very last thing that happened.

Sometimes it is not possible to write success criteria that are in any way helpful. For example:

Learning intention: we are learning to recognise the present tense and to be able to write in the present tense consistently when it suits our purpose as writers.
Success criteria:
- Our writing will contain indicators of the present such as tense-related adverbs like 'today' or 'now'.
- Our writing will have all verbs in the present tense.
- All other grammatical features will agree with the verb tense.

How helpful are these criteria? It depends on how much the student already knows about language. But understanding the success criteria may well require as much knowledge as the learning intention itself. There is a good chance that if they can understand these success criteria, they will already be able to control tense. Defining some success criteria for this learning does not add much value, and it will be much more useful to the learner to provide multiple examples of 'present' tense and 'not present' tense, with the learning coming from repeated attempts of using present tense language correctly in the presence of, and with feedback from, an expert language user: the teacher.

The example above shows that not all types of learning are susceptible to clear criteria

nsive criteria in order for students to come to understand the important features. few people know how to articulate the important features. Describing a list of of the present tense, for example, is not easy. And we do not typically learn tense at approach. For some learnings — typically things such as language and motor iccess criteria, no matter how they are written or described, add little as guides to With these types of learning, success criteria might become a simple guide to how uld be assessed.

ple:

ng intention: to learn to use initial letter sounds as an aid to decoding iliar words.

s criteria: we will know you are trying this when you make the beginning sound ds you don't know.

rion is worded in a much more child-friendly way than the learning intention (which s to be reworded into child-speak), and suggests a performance target of actually g to sound the beginning letters of words so that the child knows what they have to ler to meet the teacher's expectation of engaging with the learning. There is some iired from the child that this will make sense in time. Another example:

ing intention: we are learning to ride a bike.

ss criteria: to ride in a straight line for 10 m without falling off.

not add much to 'learning to ride a bike' but again it does give a little performance ng the way. However, it is probably more meaningful to watch someone ride a bike: or exemplar.

iary course in macro-economic theory will normally be accompanied by a textbook. y each chapter of such textbooks invariably summarises the significant learning s of the chapter. These are in effect the learning intentions *and* the success criteria. the extent to which your understanding of the chapter matches against the success omes from your ability to successfully complete the problems given at the end of the If you can do all of the problems, then you probably have a good understanding of epts described. Such a textbook contains both types of success criteria.

e examples should not be taken to imply that success criteria are not important in cumstances. Quite the reverse. These examples show that in all learning you have to 's, suitable to the nature of the learning, of articulating what features of the learning be attended to as learning proceeds, and what success at that learning might finally e.

s to be learnt — exemplars of what it is and of what it is not

the most powerful way of describing what is to be learnt is to provide an exemplar ple of it. Words cannot describe everything. As Sadler (1987) points out, it is difficult iple of it. Words are needed to describe criteria and ess progress and quality in words alone. Words are needed to describe criteria and ess progress and quality in words alone. In *A Journey in Ladakh*, Andrew Harvey (1983)

'All words fall short of the shining of things, things exist that are unnameable, we need to be able to see through the word to the thing.'

If the learning is a process or skill then showing a *model* is an appropriate way of demonstrating the intended learning. (For example, showing someone riding a bike, delivering a speech, giving feedback to a teacher about a lesson, taking part in a group discussion.) If the learning results in a product then an exemplar might be more appropriate. (For example, showing a piece of narrative writing, handwriting, a fully worked mathematical algorithm, a painting in a particular style.)

Showing someone an exemplar of the learning (for example, riding a bike) not only clearly demonstrates what the learning is intended to result in, it also allows you to draw attention to particular aspects of how it is being done ('Notice how he pushes the bike forward to gain some momentum at the start. This helps him gain his balance.') — to describe or derive the success criteria with the students. These can then be written down if this will help the learner.

Figure 3: Poetic writing exemplar

mplar should
levant to the learning intention and exemplify the intended learning;
iplify the next steps of the learning rather than being several steps removed
. the learning: if you want the student to really make meaning of the example,
ot use an example that is so sophisticated that it is difficult for the student to
:rstand how the features that are important to the work can at all connect with
evel that they are at;
v in-depth discussion between teacher and student about the features of the example
the student should attend to so that success criteria can be co-constructed.

ganised teaching resources, where the learning requires an increasing level of
ion in performance or understanding by the student, such as in written language
f the scientific method, exemplars are supplied for a series of levels of development
. a matrix of success criteria that apply to each level. The New Zealand National
n Exemplars are an excellent example of one such resource.
ig to recognise a concept can often be helped with exemplars of the concept and
plars of what the concept is not. For example, helping students to recognise and
hors in writing, you might give them some examples of metaphors, and some
of other descriptive strategies that are not metaphors, and ask them to analyse the
iing features.

levelop learning intentions and success criteria
ou work out what you want your students to learn? There are two places to start
g about what we intend our students to learn. The first, in a learning-focused
ip is, of course, with the students, and what they know now. The second is with
ulum.

ey know now
er knows that the next learning step they take in any area must build on what they
can do now. Unfortunately teachers have often not provided classroom conditions
s happens. A study of Year 7 and 8 New Zealand students showed that, prior to a
ie Antarctic environment, they, on average, already knew 45 per cent of what the
wanted them to learn, with wide variation around that average (Nuthall & Alton-
7). This means that many of the students risked becoming bored during the unit
hey already knew what the teacher intended that they learn! Another study (Marsano,
owed a strong correlation (0.66) between a student's prior knowledge of a topic and
t to which that student learns new information on that topic. The more you know
opic, the more easily you will learn more.
these, somewhat contrasting, studies suggest is that it is absolutely critical to deter-
assess, the prior knowledge that your students bring to the upcoming topic or unit to
her teaching what they already know or teaching them something that they cannot
or experience to bear on. There are a number of ways in which you can do this.

the teacher *on* the student. The student may be told the mark or grade but often that is the extent of their involvement. It makes more sense from our perspective if the assessment is collaborative and the student is fully involved in the selection of the assessment tool (where there is any choice), the administration, the marking, and especially the analysis. We spend more time on this in Chapter 5, but the analysis should result in both teacher and student having a deep understanding of what the student currently knows, and what would make sense to both of them for the student to learn next. It requires the student to engage in some speculation, or hypothesis making, as to what that next learning might look like. This process of speculation is hugely advantageous in actually engaging the student actively with the next learning, of keeping the learner in control of the learning. Peter Elbow puts it this way in reference to developing ability in reading:

> '... students invariably read better if they write first – if they start by writing their own thoughts about a topic that the class will tackle in a text. Even if the topic is scientific, factual, or technical, and students know little or nothing about it, I tell them, "Write your hunches about this topic – even your fantasies. What do you wish were true?"
>
> 'For example, before having students read an essay about dropping out of school, I might ask them to free write about whether they think the number of dropouts has gone up or down in recent decades – and speculate about the causes of dropping out. Before reading an analysis of environmental degradation and a proposal on how to deal with it, students might speculate about the causes and suggest solutions of their own. Before conducting an experiment that involves rolling balls of different weights down inclined planes, students might speculate about the results. Starting with writing rather than reading highlights how learning and thinking work best: as a process of hypothesis making and hypothesis adjustment in which the mind is active rather than passive.
>
> 'After writing their hunches students are more attentive to what the author wrote – sometimes out of mere curiosity to see how well their ideas match the material ...' Elbow, 2004

When a more formal type of assessment is not possible or desirable, a discussion can take place with students about what they know already about a possible learning intention. And you can ask them to speculate about what they think they might learn or what that learning might look like. This leads of course very easily into an examination of exemplars and an analysis of the features that characterise those exemplars.

If you have used this approach of having your students (*all* of your students) helping to tune your learning intentions to their needs they will be highly engaged and wanting to begin the learning. All you have to do is ensure that your intentions fit with the curriculum!

The curriculum
The New Zealand curriculum consists of a set of key competencies, eight essential learning areas, and underpinning values. It is the responsibility of each school and each teacher to adopt a planned approach to ensuring that every student has rich opportunities to learn what is in the curriculum before they complete Year 13, to the level that they are able at a pace that is suitable to them. Each teacher at each year level has a responsibility to ensure that all

't need to read the curriculum every day, but we do need to know it very well and
rofessional commitment in ensuring that our children have opportunity to work
aims. For each learning area in the curriculum there is a one- or two-page 'essence
that describes what the subject is about, why we want children to study it, and
rriculum is structured. You need to be very familiar with all of the statements that
ur teaching and be able to paraphrase them for students at whatever level they are
they are also completely clear about why they are studying the subject in the

ence statement gives the highest and most general description of what we want
learn. They are the most global of learning intentions. In fact they are more general
l: *universal* might be a better term. We never teach at such a high level but it is where
ur thinking and our planning about what students need to know and be able to do.
t we might choose to share these universal learning intentions with the students so
an also keep the big picture of the learning in mind as they focus down on specifically
will learn next. The focusing down may go through several different layers that lead
m one layer to the next. For example, see Table 6 on the opposite page.
it be useful to think of these differing layers as sort of making up a pyramid of
itentions with the very few universal ones at the top and the specific at the bottom.
nt 'tool' for teachers is the breaking down of the learning into manageable 'chunks'.
almost infinite number of possible learning intentions at the specific layer because
l learnings such as 'full stops' may themselves require breaking down into even
arning steps for some students, such as 'we are learning to recognise full stops',
loes not take them long to learn and the only success criteria that can be ascribed
that they can successfully point to full stops in a variety of sentences. We can then
o more significant learning.
you have determined what the students want to learn next you can go to your
rived general or specific learning intentions and revise them as appropriate.

ear about why it is to be learnt — the relevance of the learning

ar and explicit about what is to be learnt is only a part of the job. Students also
ain agency over the relevance and the process of the learning. Relevance is derived
ain sources. The first aspect of relevance comes from relating the learning to more
e demands of students' current life. One student was asked why learning to describe
er in detail was important. He offered the view that the relevance of learning was
good description of someone caught stealing could be given to the police. It might
ay you would learn it, but it made sense to this student and gave him the motivation

ers can, however, tie themselves up in knots trying to create real-life relevance for
For example, the learning of how to do quadratic equations is difficult to relate to
at least for most students. For this sort of learning, relevance is mostly related to the
he subject, which is the second aspect of relevance. Explaining why something should
should be convincing and easy if you have constructed your learning intention top

	Layer	Source	Learning intention	Success criteria
	TABLE 6: LAYERS OF LEARNING INTENTIONS			
1.	Universal – essence	From the English essence statement.	By engaging with text-based activities, students become increasingly skilled speakers and writers . . .	Our speaking and writing match exemplars of adult speaking and writing.
2.	Universal– curriculum strand and level	From the English creating meaning strand, Level 2 achievement objective: Purpose and audiences.	Show a developing understanding of how to shape (written) texts for different audiences and purposes – through choice of content, language and text form, constructs texts that demonstrate a developing awareness of audience and purpose.	We can produce texts for different audiences that have all the qualities shown in the Level 2 English Writing Exemplars.
3.	Global	From prior assessment of students and the school English scheme.	'We are learning to write an argument which is convincing.'	Our argument • starts with a summary of the argument; • uses persuasive language; • uses logical sequence; • is written clearly for the reader (grammatical) so that they don't get distracted from the argument; • has a conclusion which appeals to the audience.
4.	General	From layer 3 success criteria.	'We are learning to sequence an argument.'	Each step in our sequence will • logically follow on from the previous one; • contain the main points of the sequence of the argument in a paragraph; • our teacher and our peers will agree there is a logical sequence.
5.	Specific	From layer 3 or 4 success criteria.	'We are learning what a paragraph is and when to start a new one.'	Our paragraph • usually starts with the main information; • follows with examples or ideas to support the main information;

le, here is a learning intention in which the relevance is derived from two sources:
ıg intention: we are learning to write a short, exciting narrative.
 criteria:
 narrative will have an introduction and a conclusion.
 narrative will sequence events.
 narrative will use the present tense to build a sense of immediacy and urgency.
nce: so that we grow our ability to shape (written) texts for different audiences and
es: so that we can write e-mails and texts to our friends that they want to read.

chers consider the relevance of the learning intention it will often challenge its
or example, learning to use capital letters and full stops as a learning intention is
ality, without the thinking around why and how punctuation is important. After
ing, it may well be that the learning intention changes to become much richer; for
we are learning to make our ideas clear to the reader. The capital letters and full
ı become the success criteria that evidence this learning.
:ason *you* think they should learn it should come both from your intellectual
ıding of why it is important to children to learn what is in the curriculum, and your
l commitment to their learning. If they don't accept your explanation, then there is
g wrong with the way you have explained it. Maybe you don't really believe they
Maybe you don't feel connected to that subject yourself and don't have either an
l or intellectual commitment. That is your problem, you should solve it, and you
ake certain that you don't make it the children's.

clear about how it is to be learnt
learning process

ıg to the students how you have thought about the intended learning process (tasks
'ities) is very important. Not that it is necessarily negotiable, any more than the
m is negotiable. Co-construction is not about giving up your power to the students,
ring that neither they nor you exercise any power in a way that is detrimental to the
ring. However, sharing your intention and seeking acceptance or improvement is
gency. However, sharing your intention and seeking acceptance or improvement is
nportant in providing students an opportunity to voice what they believe might not
 them and why. As in any co-constructed process, merely voicing a view is no more
t. If you accept it, you do so because you believe that the view has validity. If you
 you will give your reasons for the rejection and each of those reasons needs to be
 Students who buy-in to the learning intention will seldom argue about how you
1ey learn.

s to watch out for

:ar with your students about what is to be learnt sounds straightforward, but there
mber of things that it pays to consider every now and again.

Keeping the focus

Learning intentions need to form the reference point for the lesson, always keeping the big picture in mind, and be referred back to when teachers and students reflect on how their learning/teaching is going. This means that generally they should be displayed and there are a variety of ways of doing this, including 'mental display' where they are not written down at all but just referred to frequently by the teacher. This way of course carries some dangers from poor memories or latecomers because they are not available to the learner to refer back to.

Being open to emergent possibilities

No teacher likes the idea of being 'locked in' to a narrow, tightly specified curriculum that does not enable them to bring their own thinking, flair, energy and intelligence to the classroom. On the other hand, if everything that we teach is to be derived from the curriculum, how do we avoid it? The answer is that when you have a good grasp of the 'bigger picture' of what the curriculum is asking you to teach students — as described in the essence statements — you can see that there are a myriad different ways of having students develop those bigger understandings. This means that if, in the midst of a unit of work or a lesson, a new, timely context emerges, perhaps from the students themselves, that you believe will allow you to guide the students to learn even more effectively, then you can change tack because the overall big picture is still the same. If you do not have this big picture you do not know the overall direction you are meant to be heading in and you will feel stuck in a narrow teaching rut.

Alignment

It may seem obvious, but the success criteria and the exemplars need to illustrate the learning intention, and all three need to be closely related to the learning tasks. We often find that there is no alignment at all, or that it is so loose that it is confusing for the students. For example, in a recent lesson:

Learning intention: to observe and record or write down the steps to making a sandwich.
Success criteria: writing the recipe using action verbs (refers children to a list of action verbs).
Exemplar: teacher models making a sandwich and describes the process they are going through, and the reasons they have selected each ingredient, with the expectation that the children will write down the procedure as they do so.
Relevance: if you eat good food you will lessen the chances of getting diabetes (as the students reported it).

What messages can the students possibly take from this? Is the lesson about procedural writing, about health, about both? Who can be sure? Not surprisingly, in this lesson, 80 per cent of the students were off-task during the demonstration and all of those interviewed thought the lesson was about making a healthy sandwich. To make it more focused on the learning intention the teacher would need to scaffold the learning more clearly around the children writing down each step of the process as they went. They might talk about each step, discuss what might be

rated English and Health unit, they would need to find some way of separating the
intentions so that the students did not get confused as to what the demonstration
Another example:
intention: to learn to write a recount using a formal structure.
criteria: the recount will contain:
troduction that describes
ere
iat
iy
ien
uence
iclusion
; task: highlight the verbs in the following recount.

iple, the learning intention and the success criteria are fine but there is no alignment
sk, so how can the students be clear about what they are meant to be learning?
isions happen because teachers themselves are not sufficiently clear at the planning
he confusion continues when they do not really check with the students that they
tudents should be able to report that they see a clear alignment between tasks,
criteria exemplars and relevance throughout the entire lesson or unit.

ropriate language
gant learning intentions is of little use if they are not accessible and meaningful to
s. Depending on the age, cognitive and language levels of the student you may well
ord your learning intention and elaborate on it so that it can become meaningful to
and provide both of you with a shared vocabulary to describe what is to be learnt.
imple, to revisit a learning intention used earlier:
ig intention: to learn to begin to use initial letter sounds as an aid to decoding
liar words.
led learning intention: what we want to learn is that if you can't read a word, a place
is to say the beginning sound — this will help you then guess or find the word.
t be supported by the teacher commenting:

*learning this because it's a useful way of trying to read new words. I will know you are trying
n you make the beginning sound of words you don't know.'*

xample:
ng intention: to learn the role played by different parts of the digestive system.
ded learning intention: what you are learning to do is understand the journey of
om entry to exit using the names for each body part.

ed language needs to be learnt, and this is often the case, then that becomes another

Is there an order to the use of learning intentions, exemplars and success criteria?

Most often teachers will plan a unit with the students — finalise the learning intentions, exemplars, models and success criteria — and then begin teaching. While this is a sequence that makes sense, it can be altered if it suits the learner and the learning best. For example, in a science lesson the teacher may decide to start with a demonstration of an experiment, followed by a discussion time about what might have happened and why, and then a collaborative shaping up of a learning intention.

This looks like a different sequence but in fact is a motivating way to determine what students' entry-level knowledge is and to invite them into being active learners through hypothesising about the demonstration. It is all shaped towards enabling the students to be clear about what the learning is.

The sequence is not important. Teachers of reading do a similar thing when they read a story to children, pause at a certain point, and ask the children what they think might happen next. It both provides the teacher (and the student) with information about the extent to which the children can do this, and engages the student actively in creating meaning for themselves.

How often do we need new learning intentions?

It is important to remember that the teacher does not need a new learning intention for every lesson every day of the week for every student. A new learning intention is only necessary when there is new learning to be done. Many teachers photocopy their short-term plan and put it on display. As part of their formative planning they adjust their planning, which as the week goes on becomes more and more messy as notes are added, but it is always visible for students to comment on and contribute to.

Confusions that often occur with learning intentions

'Learning' or 'doing'?

What is the difference between what you want students to learn and what you want them to do? This should be simple, but seems a difficult distinction to make sometimes. Asking people to abseil is quite different from asking them to learn to abseil. And they will not want the sequence to be in the wrong order. What often happens in school, however, is that students are asked to engage in activities — like writing a story — when it is not clear to the students that they are meant to be *learning* something about writing a story. Because they are not clear that the activity is about learning, they just get on and do it.

Here is a list of learning intentions:
- learning to abseil
- learning to write a story
- learning how to write a story
- learning to make a ruler

st of activities:
iling
ing a story
ribing how stories are structured so that they are interesting for the reader
ing a ruler
suring the length of a table

ence is semantic, and therefore very important. The first list is explicit about
on it being needed to be learnt. The second list is just stuff that needs to be done
s that will aid the learning. Unless you are explicit with your students, they (and
) will get confused.
ed to remember that what you write and what you say is all that your students see
you write your learning intention as 'we are writing recounts' they will not see it
learning to write recounts'. Neither will they see it as 'we are learning how to write
The 'how' is a very interesting little word and you need to be clear about what you
. In some contexts it doesn't mean very much.
ig how to abseil, and learning to abseil, are probably one and the same, but in
exts it signals a big distinction. We generally do not want students just to know
ite, we want them to be able to actually write. In the overview at the beginning of
we made this distinction clear by showing that the 'how' is on the way to knowing
ig, not the other way around.
often the best way to have students become skilled writers is to work with them to
understand the 'how'; the structures and artificers of language that can be used to
ticular effects. The 'how' can provide a framework for thinking about something
s the doing of it. For example, knowing how to write a piece of persuasive writing
hat the writer has in their head some bullet points (the success criteria if you like)
y can make mental reference to when writing a piece of persuasive writing. This
from a student makes the point powerfully:

been writing speeches for years, but we didn't ever know how to write one until now. From now
n we have to write one, we'll know how to do it.'

n, from a principal:

mber clearly, in the 6th Form, being coached in how to read and answer exam questions – that
ed significantly on my exam successes right through my tertiary education – I wasn't taught to
them – I was taught how to answer them – read the question, locate the key words, think about
was being asked to do, think about what information I knew and how to reorganise it so that it
red the question . . . '

ortant to go beyond the 'how' to actually skilfully write the persuasive speech or
swer So in phrasing learning intentions, we have to think very carefully about what

Merit, significance, relevance?

When teachers start to avoid the language of activities and engage the language of learning, they often find themselves suddenly dissatisfied with their first attempts at formulating learning intentions, especially when they have to explain to their students why it is important to learn it. For example, with a learning intention of 'to learn to use adjectives in my recount story', the teacher can struggle to provide an explanation of relevance that is convincing to herself, let alone to the students.

A learning intention such as 'we are learning to write an argument which is convincing' produces the opposite problem. Here the learning intention is defined so globally that it is very easy to explain the relevance, but not so easy to actually teach until it is broken down into a number of much smaller learnings, which can sometimes be different for each student. The advantage of beginning with such a global learning intention is that it does keep the wider importance of the learning clear to the students, even when they start to burrow deep into the superficial aspects of punctuation and spelling. The students will easily see why they need to learn some of the mechanics of language in order to be competent at the bigger learning.

When good learning intentions go bad

Teachers find the idea of being clear with their students about what they are going to learn very appealing. It makes a lot of sense and is something they feel they can achieve with their students. Often they find that their kids do like this new idea too; and it seems easy enough to use the labels of learning intentions and success criteria. However, over the ensuing months it can often become very routine; both kids and then the teacher get a little bored with it. Especially if the teacher decided that they needed to write up learning intentions every day, and even more so if they decided to get the kids to write them into their books. Now it seems that this once-good idea has turned out to be just another teaching trick that in fact doesn't really do the trick at all, and they begin to wonder why they bothered re-labelling things as learning intentions. They have just become words to the kids. They can repeat them if necessary but they don't really understand them or how they are meant to help. What goes wrong?

A big problem with any label is that, over time, it can cease to really signify the underlying idea; like a webpage hyperlink that just returns a 'the page cannot be displayed' error message when it is clicked on.

What to do about this? For a start, be wary of using labels too much. This is why this chapter is called 'being clear about what is to be learnt' rather than 'learning intentions'. We wanted to use a longer, less poetic but clearer title to be certain that the concept underlying learning intentions would be obvious. We could have made it even longer to say something like 'making sure that both teacher and students are very clear about what is to be learnt, how it is to be learnt and why it is to be learnt'.

Often, the connection was never there in the first place. Take this example from a Year 1 class:

Learning intention: we are learning where to use capital letters and full stops.

Success criteria: you will have capital letters and full stops in the right places, for

ce: the teacher did not explain why the children should learn these things.
children would be likely to give an answer that applies generally to the whole
um and schooling experience — 'that you need to be able to write when you
er'. This becomes of little help in really understanding the learning intention.

number of problems with framing learning intentions like this over and above the
evance. The first is that there is very little difference between the learning intentions
ccess criteria so that the success criteria are in fact of little help in giving the
clearer idea of what the learning intention is about.

ly, the learning intention is framed in such a way that it is difficult to understand
igger idea or concept is that you want the students to learn. And it won't be clear
lents either. All the students can take out of this is that they are learning to use
d full stops and they will have learnt it successfully when they can use them! Too
earning intentions are written as concrete, specific things to learn that do not have
ident bigger idea associated with them. What is the bigger idea? Why should we
to use capitals and full stops? We don't really know what this teacher had in mind,
ls to be a reason that is a little more concrete and immediate than 'it will be useful
re older', and something that captures the essence of 'sentenceness'. Something less
il than 'learn to use capitals and full stops'; something that indicates 'why'. It might
we are communicating to others we want to separate our ideas to others so that
ach idea clearly: in little packets'. If this is the concept (the learning intention) and
backed up with illustrations and exemplars, then this is much more likely to be
il and might look like this:

ng intention: when we are communicating to others we want to separate our
o others so that they see each idea clearly — in little packets.

s criteria: we will have capital letters and full stops in the right places: for
le, beginnings of sentences, names, etc.

nce: so that others can understand all of our ideas in our writing clearly.

to write learning intentions like this and even harder to write them in language
to young students. So much of our own learning history is not based on being clear
at to learn. When we were at school we just did the activities and over time learnt
it we seldom really knew why. We did not have agency as learners and we now, as
do not appreciate the importance of this if we want active learners. Why do we
sentences? If we, as the teachers, are not really clear, then we cannot really tell
clearly what we want them to learn and why. As a result our learning intentions will
vhat shallow and meaningless and often simple repeats of what we were taught in
Vhen this is the case it is not surprising that 'learning intentions' start to feel plastic
ng to ourselves and to the students. The students start to fail to know what they are
to achieve. When students don't know what the intention is behind learning
is then we have clearly lost it.

g question for us is: how do you really understand when you have framed your

really difficult, and requires sustained pondering on what you are really wanting students to learn. As you ponder your original learning intentions, they begin to change as you re-conceptualise them into more adequate frames.

> For example, Allan and Robyn planned as a team. They might start with:
> *'learning to use adjectives in our writing'*
> which then becomes:
> *'learning to carefully describe an event that builds a picture in the reader's mind'*
> which then finally becomes:
> *'learning some powerful language tools that help your writing connect with the reader'.*

Having colleagues critique your learning intentions is one way; having your students do it too is another. Give them the power to really critique your learning intentions and see if they (the learning intentions) survive. It doesn't matter at all if they don't because better, more adequate ones will arise in their place. To retain the connection the connection needs to be continually tested.

We have also found that teachers find the idea of being clear intellectually appealing, and easy enough to understand at a level at which they believe they can implement learning intentions reasonably easily in the class. In fact, what happens is that this intellectual engagement does not go the next step, which is to also really intellectually engage the students with the same idea. What we tend to do is tell them about learning intentions but we do not really engage them, or ourselves, in thinking deeply about what they really mean, what the actual concepts are, why we should learn them, or what it might be like once we have learnt them. So we should do that. We should ask questions of ourselves and of the students about what you *really* want them to learn. What we find is that as we continue to teach assessment for learning principles to teachers we continue, year after year, to understand all of the concepts differently, and more deeply. What seemed obvious and clear one year suddenly becomes very shallow and unsatisfactory the next year. Our own thinking about learning intentions followed exactly this pattern.

'Learning intentions' don't work unless you are metacognitive about them as well. If we had laminated our approach to discussing learning intentions then we would likely never have gone deeper and discovered that we did not understand them as well as we thought. We do this, in part, by asking new team members to teach learning intentions to teachers. They do not understand how we have written about them as we understand. They ask naïve and really useful questions about the gap between what they think and what they see from us that causes us to also see gaps. Sharing your thinking with your students will result in the same spiral of learning.

If you don't model reflection about everything, such as learning intentions, then you won't be reflective and you won't deepen your understanding, and your approach to learning intentions will become automatic and shallow and feel recipe driven.

Sharing learning intentions

Shared agreement and understanding between teachers, students (and parents) about what is to be learnt and why, is critical because often students, particularly underachievers, don't

hings, get disheartened because their efforts don't lead to success and 'retire hurt'.
ute their success to luck and their failure to lack of ability (Dweck, 1999).
ely, helping students attribute their successes and failures to effort and strategy
luck or ability is one of the most important things teachers can do for their
cause it impacts on their achievement and the way they approach their ongoing

agreement and understanding between teachers and students about what is to be
why is also critical because often it's not that students can't learn, it's that they
to or can't see the point. The problem is motivational rather than cognitive.
udents see why something is important is more likely to trigger their personal
arn and this desire is an incredibly powerful force that can carry learners through
isappointments and difficulties (Crooks, 2002).
v should we do it?

tudents need to learn to contribute
g clear about the learning

being successful at being clear with your students, your students should be able to
terested party, in their own words, the following:
r global and specific learning intentions;
at quality work looks like and the criteria for quality (success criteria);
v they can use exemplars to assist them in knowing what they are aiming for;
y what they are learning is relevant and important;
ir individual learning goals.

lso want your students to know that they should know these things and to tell you
d assertively if they do not around any part of their learning.
: students do not have an expectation that they will know these things you will have
hem. Here is a learning intention and success criteria that you might use, written
students' perspective:
ing intention: we are learning to know how to be clear about what we are going
n.
ss criteria: clarity is about being able to state
r global and specific learning intentions;
at quality work looks like and the criteria for quality (success criteria);
w we can use exemplars to assist us in knowing what we are aiming for;
iy what we are learning is relevant and important;
ir individual learning goals.
e do this by
  telling our teacher that we do not understand or are not clear whenever we are not;
  telling our teacher when we feel they are not constructing the learning intention with us or
  from what we know now

If you used the 'Try This!' unit on 'what learning is about' in Chapter 1, pages 25–26
this will slot in with it nicely and really consolidate the sense your students have of
genuinely having agency in your classroom.

Having a discussion with your class about what might be learnt next

Teacher: Our programme has creative writing on it for the next three weeks, so we
need to talk about what you might learn about creative writing over that time. What
I want to do now is discuss the ideas I have for this, give you an opportunity to think
about how you might want to build your creative writing skills, and work out together
what we might actually do. Sound good?

Teacher: *I* have done my thinking and I don't want to flood you with it until you have
had a chance to do your own thinking, so what I would like you to do now is find
the last piece of writing that you did, probably the last piece of creative writing, but it
may be another genre. Have a look at it against the criteria that were set for it, and see
what aspects of those criteria you feel you will want to improve further. If you choose
the piece that was done for the Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (asTTle)
assessment, have a look at the analysis of that and see what ideas it gives you. If you
get stuck, ask me or one of your friends for help. Everyone understand? Thumbs up?
Sideways? Down? Okay, ten minutes for this.

Teacher: Now, has everyone got something in their heads? Good. Now *you* and I have
got something in our heads about what you might learn next. You all probably have
different things. Let's 'think, pair, share' and see what you come up with. Let's see
what is common, if anything.

The class carries out the exercise and generates a list of what the kids want to learn.
There are some commonalities about impact on the reader.

Teacher: So it seems that a lot of you want to continue to find ways of more powerfully
hooking in the reader. That is really interesting because that is what I had in my head
too! I'm going to find some short pieces of writing that hook me in, you can do that
too, and we will then bring them back, share them, and analyse how the writer has
done it so that we can get our success criteria . . .

ACTIVE REFLECTION ABOUT LEARNING

s active reflection?

are, as a profession, very reflective. They do think about what did or did not work
1: what they would have done differently and what they will do differently in future
hey make all kinds of decisions, based on this reflection, about class management,
individual students, how to change or renew resources, which colleagues to discuss
h, and about what to do next.

: reflection takes this process further so that it becomes goal-focused, evidence-
d inclusive of the student. It applies to the teacher ('How do *I* think about this?'),
udent ('How do *I* think about this?'), and to both together ('How do *we* think
s?').

etter the information basis for the reflection, the more adequate it will be. Poor
is when you ask: 'Was that [lesson] okay?' and you affirm that it was, without further
about what 'okay' might actually be, or further consideration about what information
ld need to gather, to be able to reasonably objectively reach that decision.

e reflection is fundamental to teachers and learners who are serious about producing
aining the conditions for effective learning. A learning-focused relationship — based
iples of openness, honesty and mutual respect — requires that both teacher and
spend time, individually and together, considering how they genuinely have
iced the learning process, assessing the effectiveness of the learning, and reflecting on
ity of the learning.

ve reflection is about monitoring every aspect of the teaching and learning process
ning, learning, teaching, assessing and student achievement — against a benchmark,
d, or quality indicator, so that connections can be made as to what has worked well
ds to be repeated. This enables adjustments to be made on areas that have not worked
to improve learning outcomes. It includes becoming aware of your own thinking
es, and being able to make those transparent to others. It is part of a process of
ion that occurs at the individual level (self-reflection); and at the class or collegial level
t is a co-constructive activity. Active reflection is conducted in such a manner that it
the detection and change of ineffective ways of doing things; as well as ineffective
itions or beliefs that may be held, for example, about the capacity of a student to learn
kill or understanding. Without skilled reflection, both teachers and learners can be
o assumptions and values that they hold, that reduce their ability to generate effective
ions for learning.

ive reflection captures the idea that if a gap is found between how we would want
ig and learning to be and how it actually is, then something will be done to close that
is not enough just to reflect or identify that there is a gap. In a way, 'active reflection'
equivalent of combining the activities of assessment and promoting further learning at
-level. It enables a holistic approach, with planning and forward-looking characteristics,
viewing and reflection characteristics.

ing actively reflective in a learning-focused relationship means that teachers and students
make the practices and processes of teaching and learning conscious and overt, so

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This chapter examines what it means to be actively reflective about learning and teaching, and provides guidance as to how teachers can become reflective practitioners: how they can reflect with their students on the teaching and learning process, and how they can teach their students to use reflective strategies to strengthen their own capacity to learn.

Why active reflection is so important

There can be no doubt that active reflection is a fundamental component of effective teaching and learning. There are four reasons why this is the case.

1. Research says so. The major OECD study into the attributes required to function effectively within democratic society identified reflection as the central attribute:

   'Reflectiveness — the heart of key competencies

   An underlying part of this framework is reflective thought and action. Thinking reflectively demands relatively complex mental processes and requires the subject of a thought process to become its object. For example, having applied themselves to mastering a particular mental technique, reflectiveness allows individuals to then think about this technique, assimilate it, relate it to other aspects of their experiences, and to change or adapt it. Individuals who are reflective also follow up such thought processes with practice or action.' (OECD, 2005)

   Additionally, the large literatures on self-regulation of learning (Zimmerman, 2001; Darr, 2005), metacognition (Borkowski et al., 1990; Jones & Idol, 1990) and reflective practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974) — which we see as contributing to a concept of reflection — substantiate the importance of reflective capability in supporting effective learning and improvement.

2. Active learning is pivotal to building a learning-focused relationship. If neither teacher nor student is effectively reflective, there is no mechanism for detecting, discussing, and resolving barriers to learning or relationships that one or the other might be experiencing.

3. Providing students with formal opportunities to reflect, and support for building their own reflective capabilities, also builds their sense of origin and self-efficacy

Active reflection provides opportunities to recognise and celebrate success in learning (and teaching).

re two reasons why active reflection might be avoided. Often teachers can feel nervous afraid of genuine reflection, and particularly reflection that might be done with the afraid of genuine reflection, and particularly reflection that might be done with the s. They feel that if they really do enquire with the students as to how the teaching is the students might tell them things they don't want to hear. More than this, if they are take note of what is said, they may not be able to make the changes in a way that will e anything.

hers who reflect

ive teachers establish informal and formal processes for constant evaluation of g, learning, and attempts to improve teaching and learning. They constantly ponder vhether their students are learning as well as they might, and how they might adjust eaching to support the learning even further. Sitting closely behind every teaching n and action is a single, big evaluative query:

w is it going?

e power in such a 'large' question is that it can always sit in the back of your mind a constant, always there, always probing how things are to see if they can be better. provides a nagging driver to establish what 'good' looks like, so that evidence of 1at is' can be gathered and evaluated against it, and an understanding shaped of w it might be even better.

This query can also be posed with students and colleagues.

ction with students

se teaching and learning is a joint enterprise that is mutually controlled and co- ucted, the stress in this reflective query is mostly on the 'we', as in:

w are we going with this teaching/learning?

e emphasis on 'we' drives how and when you gather information to inform and aluate the queries — the direction of the teaching and learning, the pace, the level of allenge, the motivation for teaching and learning; these are all informed by this going evaluation *with* the students.

ction with self and with colleagues

tion should also take place in terms of 'I', with respect to your responsibility and y as a teacher. You query your effectiveness as a teacher not only with your students, lso by yourself, and with colleagues:

ow am I going with this teaching/learning?

What have my students learnt?
Which students have made the progress I want; which ones haven't?
What can I do to better help the students who haven't made the desired progress?

Both you and your students, and you and your colleagues, need to routinely reflect together on how all aspects of teaching and learning are going, taking in all five capabilities as shown below. We are not suggesting that everything that happens needs to be reflected on all the time. But we are suggesting that over a (longish) period of time all aspects of teaching and learning, as represented by the capabilities in the archway, will be reflected upon. At any one time, something might happen — a group of students may become disengaged, or 'learning intentions' may have begun to feel formulaic — where a more in-depth reflection of a particular aspect needs to be carried out.

The archway on page 146 shows the types of queries that you, your students and your colleagues can use to prompt reflection across the capabilities. Depending on who is actually doing the reflection, the actual voice of the question will vary.

Evidence to inform reflection

Unless good-quality evidence can be gathered about how things are now, and this evidence can be contrasted with some idea of how you would want things to be, then asking interesting questions about how the processes of teaching and learning are going is relatively ineffective, irrespective of the interest level of the questions. This book should give plenty of information about how teaching and learning should be, but what evidence should you gather about how it is going?

Reflecting with students

We can use some of the sets of reflective questions from the archway to examine this idea; for example, when you are with your students and you decide to think about this set of questions about learning-focused relationships:

- Is there a learning relationship in this class?
- Do we feel one?
- Is there genuine co-construction of the learning experience?
- What would further improvement look like?

What information is needed to provide a reasonable evidence base on which to answer these questions? How would you gather the evidence?

Reflection with the students about this should be done, most of the time, in an easy, simple way, with a minimum of formality apart from agreeing to devote some time to it. The 'evidence' will, in the first instance, come from how you and the students feel about the sense of partnership. It is not enough to just ask the students though, because they will make their judgements on the basis of how they understand partnerships to exist. You will first need to shape with them some criteria, which they understand, for what a learning-focused relationship *should* look like (see Chapters 2 and 3). This provides goal-focus for the conversation, but also the basis on which evidence can be gathered. If you have been using success criteria in your subject teaching, and students have learnt to self-assess and peer-assess, then it will be relatively easy for them to make judgements about the quality of the actual relationship,

Figure 4: Active reflection across the archway
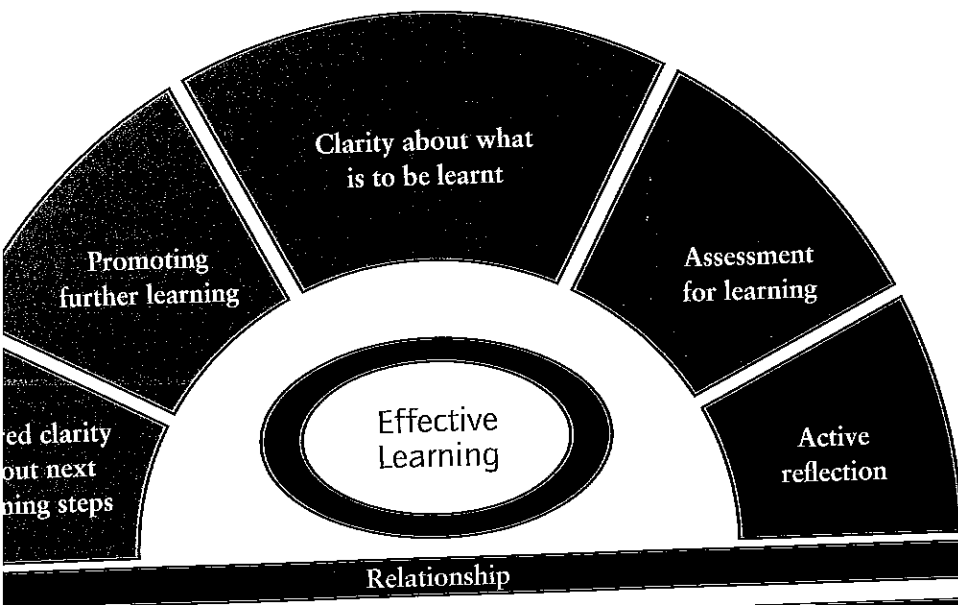
Relationship
What is my contribution to what we are learning and how we are learning it?
What could I do to make the learning more engaging and enjoyable?
What are the important messages about learning?

Clarity
What were we learning today and why?
How did the learning go? Who needs more help, and what needs to be re-taught?
What new learning can we celebrate?
What helped the learning to happen?

Assessment
What helps us know where we are in the learning?
What assessments are most helpful?
How could we improve the way we assess?
How does self- and peer assessment help us improve?
How do I make sure assessments give an accurate picture of learning?

Promoting further learning
- What am I most pleased with about the learning?
- What opportunities are there for feedback?
- What are the different kinds of feedback that I give and receive?
- What kind of help moves the learning forward?

Active reflection
- What deep thinking happened when we were learning?
- What opportunities are there to reflect about what and how we are learning?
- How could we make reflection time more helpful?
- Do I think about how I am going often; not just when we are reflecting as a class?

Next steps
- Am I clear about the progressions of learning in this subject? How could I find out?
- Are the next steps achievable and at the right level?
- How can we measure where we are at?
- What is my contribution to what happens next?

Perhaps the simplest way to gather information is to ask the students these questions directly once you do have some reasonable agreement about what the criteria are. Ask them to think individually of their own answers, and then to also think of what evidence they have for those answers. You will, of course, need to do the same thing yourself. If you allow something like 3–5 minutes for this, then ask them to use their thumbs to indicate their answers to the first three questions to the class as a whole. (Thumbs up for 'yes', down for 'no', thumbs sideways for 'not sure'.)

Depending on the pattern of answers, you might decide to explore more, or to move on to the last one. If you think you should move on you might say, 'Looks like almost everyone feels that there is a good relationship here, so let's now see if there are ways we could make it even better. Do you agree, or do you want to talk a bit more about what the partnership feels like at different times, or do you want to do something else?'

Reflecting with colleagues

Reflecting with colleagues is essentially about how well students are achieving and about how well the teaching and learning is going. The principles of gathering and using evidence to guide reflection are the same for both, but the nature of the evidence differs.

If you are to reflect with your colleagues on how strongly the assessment for learning capabilities are evident in your practice, what information is needed to provide reasonable evidence on which to answer this question? How would you gather the evidence?

For your colleagues to be able to usefully reflect with you, you will all need to
- have *either* established agreed understandings about what effective use of assessment for learning strategies looks like in practice, *or* to individually have your own ideas that you are prepared to explain, or exemplify or model;
- have some evidence of current practice. (A video of actual teaching practice provides the easiest way of gathering objective information for later discussion.)

These two sources of information then allow all of you to discuss any differences that might exist between what should be and what is. As the discussion proceeds, it is highly likely that there will be clarification and further development of the understandings of what assessment for learning should look like in practice as well.

If you are to reflect with your colleagues about the standard of student attainment as in, for example, 'How well are the five boys learning who started the year with the lowest attainment?' then you need to know both their expected performance and their actual performance.

Information around expected performance should be based on the beginning-of-the-year performance, with some estimate of expected progress since that time. (If it is not possible to make an estimate, then it is not sensible to set this as a reflective question; it might be better to examine evidence of engagement with their learning.)

Information on current performance should of course partially come from the most recent

The additional piece of information needed before really examining any gap between expected and actual attainment is the joint view of yourself and the students, that both assessments did accurately capture the level of attainment at that time. Without this assurance, reflection about gaps and progress is fraught.

Teaching students to reflect

To really engage in joint reflection with you, students also need to have reflective ability of their own. Highly effective self-regulating learners query their effectiveness as learners, with you and their peers, and independently. They constantly assess every aspect of their learning environment. They assess whether the learning environment they are in is conducive to their learning, whether the teacher is good at facilitating that learning (and if not, they will have their own strategies for deciding what to do about it). They assess where they are with their learning, which bits they understand and which bits they are stuck on. They assess the extent to which what they are learning is motivating and relevant. As a result of these assessments, they evaluate the options for what to do next. All students do this to some extent ('It's too hard', 'It's too boring', 'She's useless'), but reflective students take it to the next step and ask what they could do about it. Students who reflect like this are highly effective learners. One of your roles as a teacher is to maximise the number of students who reflect in this way.

For students to learn to be truly reflective, they have to understand the bigger picture of why it is relevant to them. They need to know that reflection about their current learning will help them in future learning situations, where they will be able to apply insights from how they have learnt in this situation to how they might be able to learn in the future. They have to know that reflection often works best when they can check how they are thinking about their learning with others. They also need to know that reflection is not always easy and improving the ability to reflect is ongoing.

Steps to teach students to reflect

1. Planning

Being deliberate about introducing the idea of reflection requires as much planning as any other concept you want students to learn. The set of steps provided here is intended to give you some ways of beginning your own planning. Let's start with a learning intention:

Learning intention: we are learning how to reflect — or maybe: make decisions about how our learning is going — and be able to talk about it with our peers.

Possible success criteria: (to be developed with the students)
- We will be able to describe what we are learning and why we're learning it.
- We will be able to describe the learning process (how we've gone about our learning).
- We will identify the parts of the learning process that are going really well or not quite right (all capabilities in the archway).
- We will take action to change things when parts of the learning process are not quite right (for example, ask the student next to me to be quiet, raise the issue at a class plenary [see page 153], discuss with a teacher).

Relevance: it is important to be able to be reflective because it helps you to manage — or have more control of — your learning and to learn more effectively.

While reflection is described as a generic capability, it is only really ever known or experienced in the context of other specific learning (such as learning to read, or understanding the nature of groups in society, or counting in twos) and so it also needs to be taught using subject learning as the context.

2. Introducing reflection to students

You might like to begin by talking with the students about the idea of reflecting on their learning, and how important it is. The most concrete way to do this is to start by reviewing the learning intention, so that this is clear in their minds. Then ask them to engage in a little self-assessment against that, and *then* to think about how that worked, for example:

> 'Think about what you did learn to do this morning. Turn and tell your neighbour. Ask your neighbour what they learnt this morning . . . Now think about how you learnt it. What helped you learn? See if you can think of that. Share that with your neighbour. See how you go.'

Or you might want them to reflect on other aspects of the reflection archway shown on page 146, for example:

> 'Think about what it is like to learn things in this class. When we were learning to . . . this morning, did you find the class a good place to learn or was it too noisy, (or) did your neighbours help you when you got stuck, (or) . . .'

Some students will find these reflective queries very easy, others will find them difficult. Make sure every student has a chance to think, and is supported to reflect. Capture all their ideas on the whiteboard, to show that they have been heard and to refer back to later. You will find that you have to support them in different ways, depending on how well they can reflect already.

3. Developing success criteria

Once they have understood what you want them to learn and why, you will want to talk with them about what success criteria for learning to reflect might look like. To do this, you could use the method we outlined in Chapter 5, to help students assess the difficulty level of their work. Discuss the difference between when learning is going well and when it is going badly. Ask them to think of a time they can remember really learning something. Shape some criteria with them around what that was like. Discuss what criteria might also look like for 'not learning well'. Tell them you are going to spend a small amount of time discussing this every day for a couple of weeks (1–2 minutes), and that you want them to be thinking during the day about whether they are actually learning or not. At each discussion the teacher records student ideas and also adds their own thoughts. These lists of criteria are displayed in the room.

4. Using exemplars and modelling

You might then decide to model what this thinking might be like for them. It helps students realise that they *can* think about their thinking when the teacher actually models this. You can do this easily by engaging in 'self-talk' or 'think aloud' where you are very explicitly talking about the sorts of things a student might be thinking about their learning.

'Think aloud'

As you check in with students' learning you can encourage them to reflect on and talk about the thinking process they use. This is often called 'think aloud' (Palinscar & Brown, 1984). As some students find the articulation of their thinking hard, you may need to model this by doing your own 'think aloud'. For example, at the beginning of a junior class group guided reading session, the teacher might model the thinking she goes through to problem-solve how to read new words. She might say:

> *'When I get stuck and I know that the word I tried looks a little bit like the word in the book, but it doesn't make sense, I read back to the beginning of the line and think about what else would fit in the story that looks like that.'*

After the students had read the text and the teacher has checked in with their processing, she might model the thinking again and ask students to think about times when they had gone through the same process and identified how they got there.

> *'I want you to find a quiet place in your mind, to think about the question I'm going to ask you. I don't want you to answer it straight away ... but I do want you all to think about it. You may find you think better if you shut your eyes or look at a spot on the floor. The main thing is that you aren't interrupted or that you don't interrupt somebody else. When I've given you 30 seconds to think about your answer, I'll tell you the 30 seconds are up. That's when I want you all to look at me without talking. To start off with, for a few times, I'll model some answers that will share how I think about the questions. Then, when some of you feel ready to give your answers, we'll listen carefully to what you have to share. What we will be doing is sharing about how we think in our heads. I'll start by sharing how I think in my head. For these types of questions there are no wrong answers. Every answer will give each of us a chance to add to our own ways of thinking.*
> *'I want you to think about what you are most pleased about in building a sense of tension in your writing [the current learning intention] ... There you are, think about that.'*

The teacher then models an answer to a question that relates to the learning intention.

> *'Now you may or may not have anything in your heads so I'll give you some ideas. Just sit there quietly and think about whether any of these things apply to you. Okay?*
> *'Now, you might have been thinking that you were pleased to know what you were learning ... thumbs up if that was what you were thinking ... Okay, thumbs down. Maybe you were pleased with the examples we had of pieces of writing that really made the reader tense ... thumbs up*

> *if that applies to you. Quite a few of you. Okay. Maybe you were pleased that you could build tension using one of the techniques we discussed earlier ... any thumbs for that? Good.'*

The teacher decides when the students are comfortable enough with this process to move into offering their own responses.

> *Teacher: 'Now, some of you might have been thinking some other things. Anyone able to share what they were thinking?'*
>
> *Student: 'I was thinking that we worked well in our groups and shared ideas really well.'*
>
> *Teacher: 'Thank you, Beth, anyone else think that too?'*

Some more sharing and then the teacher needs to make sure that the 'so what' is built in to the reflection. Otherwise, the whole reflection becomes merely a nice chat without any real focus on learning and reflection about how to improve the learning, for example:

> *Teacher: 'So now that we have shared about what we were pleased about, what is important about all of this? What should we do tomorrow when we think about all that has been said?'*
>
> *Student: 'I think we need to all make sure that we know what our learning intention is before we start learning ... '*

---

5. Using student reflection

When you are doing this reflection with students, you have to be ready to understand and respond positively to the thinking that they do share, some of which will surprise you. Often they will come up with an idea that makes sense to them from their perspective, but is not appropriate. You have to be able to explain very clearly to them why their idea is not good in terms of designing an appropriate next learning step. For example, one of them might suggest that they want to enrich the language of their writing to really get the audience on board, but if they don't have sequence yet, then your role is to convince them that they need to get reasonable sequence before they tackle audience involvement. Your expertise needs to be voiced in the discussion and heard. A reflective session is an excellent place for such a discussion; but you have to be prepared to both advocate well for your position (so that the students can see your point) and also ensure that the students still feel heard, ensuring next time they are asked they will feel it is worth their while giving their opinion. A discussion about next steps must never detract from the expertise of the teacher, or the agency of the student.

6. Promoting further learning

If, at any time, the students don't give reflective answers that relate to the learning, you will need to go back to modelling and bring them back on track. As they become more used to reflecting, you can move from modelling to other types of prompts available.

night use example prompts with students who do not need direct modelling but still
ifficult to describe how they are thinking. For example, they might say, 'When I
you working I wondered if you were thinking like this . . . or perhaps you were
like this . . . .' Which one of these is closest to how you were thinking? This is an
prompt. See also 'Think aloud' (see page 150) in this chapter for another way of
ying the thinking and learning process.

night use a *scaffold* prompt to support them into thinking, by beginning with a low-
estion, such as 'What did you find interesting about . . . ?' and following it with a
rder question 'Why did you find that interesting?' or 'What did you think/feel when
l that? Why?'

tudents who are skilled at reflection you might just use a *reminder* such as 'Tell me
nking from our last lesson'. Students who already know how to reflect might need a
:minder to use what they know on a similar task, or on a new task if appropriate. The
might say, 'Yesterday we thought about how . . . , is that helping you?' or 'See if it
rks'. An even gentler prompt might be, 'Remember to spend a little time reflecting
ow . . . before you start'.

ssing the learning about reflection

e stage you will want to assess, with your students, how well they think they can
how well they have achieved the learning intention. This can be done incidentally with
ial students, or with the whole class. From this assessment you will, jointly, plan the
ps.

g reflection in the classroom

; taught your students how to reflect, you then need to make sure that you jointly make
st of reflection to aid learning. So when should you reflect?

ntal reflection

w are we going with this teaching/learning?' is the large reflective question that
; sits in the back of your mind, then it should spring into action whenever it senses
has a role to inform and improve things; it should be true for your students too.
ire some ways of thinking about it that might be useful in promoting the use of
ntal reflection.

owerful thing about a learning-focused relationship is that it requires both teacher and
it to keep the other informed of what is going on for them, and to check that the other
re of this. It is this checking that is a constant and pervasive feature of the relationship.
are being reflective about the relationship, you will be checking the quality of it with
idents as the teaching and learning proceeds. In particular, you will be checking that
'ou and the students are bringing the full archway of capabilities to support the learning.
now what this should look like if the students are engaged, you know what it should

This does not need to lead to interrogations. It is not a big deal. It does not take significant
time, but is extremely useful in helping you detect early when things are going wrong.
A simple reflection at the right time can help you or the student get unstuck or modify what
you are doing to make it more effective. For example, if a student is disengaged from an
activity you have a choice. You can *either* say:

*'You seem to be not engaged with your . . . investigation, writing, geometry exploration, handwriting
practice, virtual fieldtrip analysis . . . Am I right? Are you finding something tricky? How can I help you?
What needs to happen for you to get back on track?'*

or:

*'I'm not sure that my last explanation was of much help to you. Did it help you move forward? Can you
explain that concept to me now?'*

Both of these queries are legitimately reflective, and are easily asked incidentally, as they
spontaneously arise from organic classroom interaction. They will both get good reflective
answers when there is an effective, learning-focused relationship in existence.

Structured reflection

Making reflection a consistent feature of classroom life is a must if the value of reflection
demonstrated by the research is to be realised. Capturing the moment for incidental reflection
with students is important, but there is also value in building in structured approaches as well.

There are two main ways in which reflection takes place within a classroom: reflection
between the teacher and a group of students, usually referred to as a 'plenary', and reflection
between the teacher and an individual student, normally referred to as a 'conference'. Peer-
to-peer reflection also can play an important part.

Plenary

A plenary is a planned, formal reflection time of 5 to 15 minutes at some stage of a lesson for
the whole group or class. It is an opportunity to reflect on what has been achieved, and to look
forward. Here are some simple decision steps to guide you successfully through plenaries.

1. **When?**
   The end of the lesson, or a chunk of learning, is a good starting place for introducing
   students to the idea of plenaries; however, once everyone is comfortable with them
   they can be used anytime that suits the particular need. Some teachers hold them at
   the beginning of a new lesson to help with the recap of the previous one. At other
   times it makes sense, particularly if you think that something is going wrong
   (everyone appears to be off-task, for example), to hold a plenary in the middle of a
   lesson and to reflect on what is happening and get it sorted.

   Many teachers comment that the plenary has become one of the most exciting
   parts of their teaching process, as they build a close relationship with their students

dominantly, a plenary is used to focus on what was intended to be learnt and the
ent to which the learning processes have helped or hindered learning for all of
 students. However, anything that is of value or importance to you or the
dents (any part of the reflection archway) can form the focus for the plenary.
ich of the time you will want it to be about the learning itself.

ting up: Gather the class or group and tell them what you want to reflect on. If
u decide to go with a review of the learning, then recap the learning intention
d success criteria.
f-assessment: Ask them to briefly assess how well they thought the learning had
ne against the learning intention and success criteria, or how they are finding the
rning relationship, or how the test has gone . . . This enables each student to do
eir own personal 'stock-take' about how things actually are and provides a basis
r reflection about how they 'should be'.
flection: Then ask one or two of the reflective questions from the archway (page
6), so that students reflect at a deeper level. These questions, or a subset of them,
e usually displayed in the room so that students become familiar with them and
pect them to be asked. Students are given up to 30 seconds, thinking time before
ly responses are sought. This sets an expectation that all students are engaged in
inking and should be able to respond. It also gives those quiet thinkers a chance
 reflect, without the time being hijacked by the quick responders. Students are
en given the opportunity to respond either in pairs or individually. When the
acher and students get a feel for how the reflection topic has gone, they can
scuss and determine the 'where to next?'

lary session takes the idea of self-assessment further. Rather than identifying what
ky or easy, it engages the students in identifying *why* the learning was tricky and how
ld be overcome; or what was especially thought-provoking or interesting and where
ght lead us in our learning; or what new learning happened in that lesson that should
rated.

enary at the beginning of a 'chunk of learning' or lesson
ection can be used at the beginning of a chunk of learning, when this is linked to
revious learning. Many teachers find the placement of reflection at the beginning
lesson an ideal reorientation time for the students as well as themselves. Teachers
it say:

*Yesterday we were learning . . . how did you go with that? Can you remember what our success
riteria were? Good, so who managed to complete . . . There seems to have been a bit of a*

*having the same problem. Would it be helpful to you if I teach you how to do that part before
we carry on with this?'*

Immediately all students get the message of what we are learning today, that it is a
continuation of yesterday's learning, and that the teacher is going to teach something
new before we actually get on with our own tasks. Teachers have used parts of this
process for many years with success. In the complexity of the busy school day, students
and teachers find a reflective session at the beginning of a lesson extremely beneficial
for re-focusing their attention on the learning intention and the finer points of the
learning process.

*'I find that I run out of time to hold a reflective session at the end of a science class, so I begin
the lesson with it the next day. First of all I have a quiz with the class on what we learned in the
previous lesson. Then, as we mark the quiz, I find out which bits are still causing them difficulty
and I use the chance to re-teach before getting into the day's lesson. This has had a tremendous
effect on the students, who are now keen to see how well they've done, what they've understood
or remembered, and who are confident in the knowledge that I will help them with their learning
before we move on to anything new.'*

Conferences
Conferences with individual students or small groups follow exactly the same process as the
plenary. Like the plenary, they might happen incidentally or in a more structured way. Some
teachers arrange formal conferences with each student that take place, either at a set time, or
when the student believes they have finished some agreed learning.

Conferencing with a dice
Dave put each of six reflective questions on the side of a dice. At individual conference time,
the dice was flipped twice and the student responded to each of the questions that came up.
In listening to the students talk about their reflections, Dave could elicit whether desired
understandings had been matched. This process of discussion and reflection helped Dave to
decide whether the student actually needed more practice or more explanation.

Dave found this to be a fun and interesting way to have students really think about their
learning and, over time, build their language for reflection. However, like any other fun
approach, remember to always keep checking that it serves the purpose of learning. With the
dice, don't get stuck with the luck of the dice; always make sure that the questions are
sensible in relation to what you want the student to think about.

Individual conferencing
Teacher: 'Do you know what your learning intention is in writing?'

ier: 'What does taking risks in your writing mean?'

:nt: 'Using amazing words.'

ier: 'So, have you used amazing words in your writing? [The teacher reads what
tudent has written: "The suspicious jaguar creeps on his unsuspecting prey."]
is wonderful language, I think you are taking risks and using amazing words in
writing. Is there anything tricky about taking risks for you?'

ent: 'I took a long time to get that down.' [The rest of the class have written about
a page or more.]

her: 'Yes, it can take a lot of thinking sometimes to come up with amazing words, and
times it needs time to do that thinking. What do you think you need help with?'

ent: 'I want to get my ideas down quickly.'

the teacher then has a conversation with the student about how they could try that.

flection

her ways of structurally building reflection into the culture of your classroom are to
iprocal teaching and co-operative learning approaches. Both of these strategies are
ffective at giving students control of their learning and enabling them to learn cognitive
ta-cognitive strategies to guide learning.

ading — a simple co-operative learning technique

: students work together on this exercise. First, both students read the same section from
instructor-provided materials. One student explains a single paragraph, or short section
ext, to his or her partner. The partner listens and then asks questions if he or she does not
and the explanation. The listener then rephrases the explanation. The students alternate
f explainer and listener until they complete all the material. When the entire class has
ted the exercise, groups of students are asked at random to explain the material to the
class. This serves as a check to make sure the students do indeed understand the material
e reading. (http://www.tki.org.nz/r/esol/esolonline/classroom/teach_strats/coop_read)

rocal teaching

ocal teaching refers to an instructional activity that takes place in the form of a dialogue
:n teachers and students regarding segments of text. The dialogue is structured by the
f four strategies: summarising, question generating, clarifying, and predicting.
acher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading this dialogue. The
se is to facilitate a group effort between teacher and students, as well as among students,
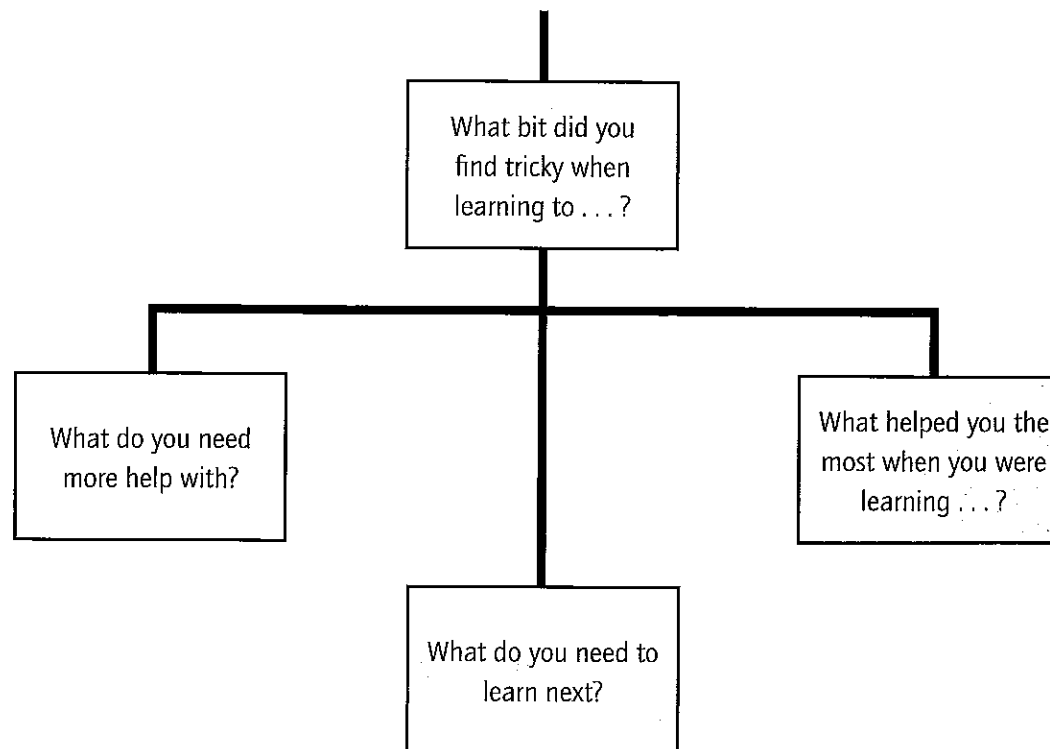
Ways to present reflective questions

1. Have one reflective question (from the archway on page 146) in a large font per page in a spiral-bound booklet (pages could be laminated to be self-supporting). They can sit on the whiteboard ledge or in a convenient place ready for the plenary session.

   What most helped the learning to happen . . . ?

2. Have each question on a poster or wall display, so that they can be pointed out during a plenary session.
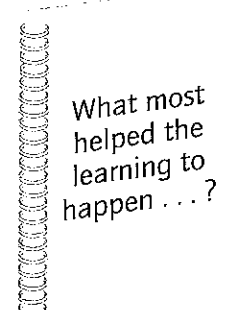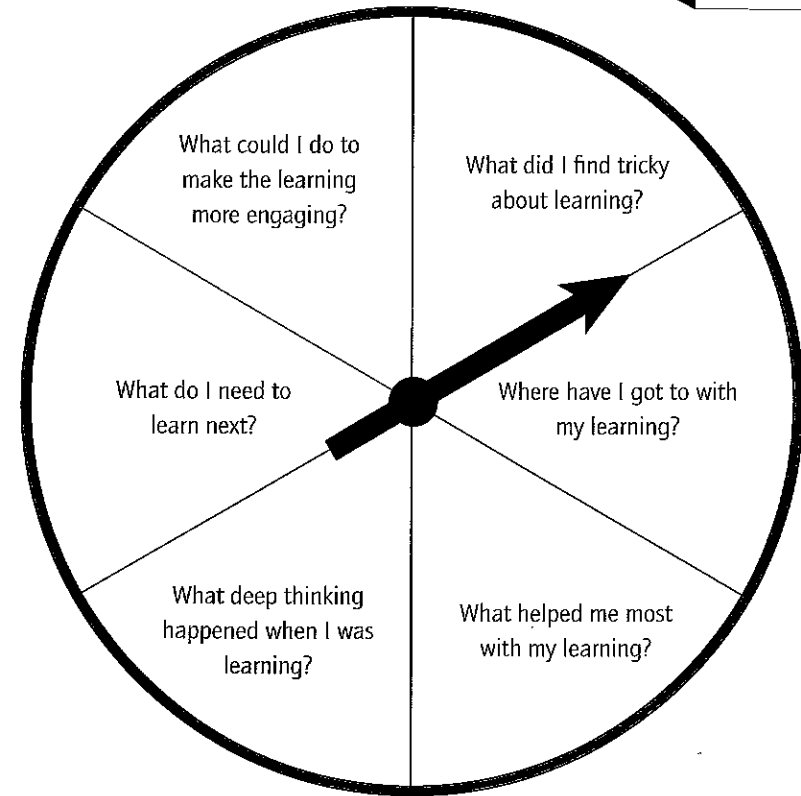
   Reflect on your learning:
   - What could I do to make the learning more engaging and enjoyable?
   - How did the learning go? What were the tricky bits?
   - What helps us know where we are in our learning?
   - What kinds of help best move my learning forward? What do you need more help with?
   - How could we make a reflection time more helpful to the learning?
   - What should we learn next?

3. Have a mobile with the questions hanging on different-coloured, laminated cards.

   What bit did you find tricky when learning to . . . ?

   What do you need more help with?

   What helped you the most when you were learning . . . ?

   What do you need to learn next?

te one question on each face of a dice. Students throw it to select the questions during the plenary ion as they reflect on their learning.

ve a circle divided into sectors with a reflective stion on each sector, and a spinner in the middle. lents spin the arrow to decide on the reflective stion to discuss.

What do you need more help with?

Actively reflecting with colleagues or by yourself
Increasing our awareness of how we think: how do you think about how you think?

Here is one little trick you could try with your colleagues for checking your collective ability to make your thinking transparent.

Place an unusual word, such as 'fissiparous', that you think your colleagues will not know, or be able to spell, on the whiteboard and tell your colleagues to try and remember it so they can spell it correctly 15 minutes later.

- Remove the word from the whiteboard and ask them to write down how they went about remembering how to spell it: what learning strategies they had used.
- Then ask them to share about the strategies they used.
- You are likely to find that they all use different strategies. Some will have broken the word into syllables; others will have looked at beginnings and endings. The meaning and the root word will have been significant hooks for some, as mnemonics or the shape of the word will have been for others.
- What they all learned was to become conscious of their thinking processes and to articulate what they did when they tried to remember how to spell a new word. As a result of this discussion, the teachers appreciate that their students would also use a variety of strategies to learn to spell words, or to learn anything for that matter. The final step of the process was to get them thinking about sharing their thinking processes with their pupils. This enables the students to 'see an example' of what thinking about thinking is about. As well as a useful exercise in helping teachers to become more aware of how they think, this is also one way you can make a start in engaging your students in reflective conversations about 'thinking about thinking'.

Increasing our ability to make our reflection evidence-based
What should you consider when you want to reflect on your own practice? What information should you collect about that practice? The relevant information comes from two sources — information about student achievement, and information about teaching and learning.

Student achievement
Achievement is about the extent to which students have learnt to the level reasonably expected. This must be established before you can do any meaningful reflection, even about the quality of your teaching. We have much evidence from our work with schools that shows what looks like good teaching can often have a miserable impact on achievement, unless that teaching is definitely focused on moving the students on. Establishing what 'expected progress' looks like is never easy, and needs to be considered in the context of each student in each subject for which progress is expected. In subjects where there are not good assessment tools, you may have to rely on professional experience to make the judgement. As long as you do this with colleagues, there is nothing wrong with this. In subjects where there are good normative assessments available (literacy and numeracy), you can set good expectations at

ig your capability to actively
on your own practice
d to learn how to become reflective? Are we like our students? Or can we just do bably more a matter of finding ways of improving our ability to reflect, rather than nything really new. To be effectively reflective, we do need to be able to make our own thinking about what is happening in the classroom, so that we can describe ng to our students or colleagues. We need to be able to use formal processes for

Teaching and learning

How well do you teach? How do you know? The capability archway described in this book (see page 24) provides one way of defining what 'good teaching' looks like. All you need to do is gather some information about your actual teaching, and then establish a situation where you can compare the two. There are two ready sources of information: your classroom and your students.

Videoing your practice

One way of gathering evidence about how you teach is to video your own teaching. A gentle lead-in to this practice is done by setting a video camera up in one corner of the classroom to capture the part of a lesson you want to focus on. The next step is to watch the video on your own and self-reflect. Some of the questions you can ask yourself are:

- How well did I teach?
- Did we discuss the learning intentions?
- Did I give the students a chance to co-operatively plan the success criteria?
- Did I give the students an opportunity to signal they were understanding the learning they were wanting to learn?
- Did I give them an opportunity to share their understandings with each other?
- Did I give them an opportunity to share their understandings with me?
- Did we leave the lesson with a clear understanding about the next steps in learning?

For an even better opportunity to reflect, you can choose a specific part of a lesson you are aiming to improve; for example, taking a plenary with the students. Asking a colleague to video a specified part of a lesson, viewing it together, and discussing the opportunities for improving that part, initially takes courage. However, if you are serious about improving children's learning and you have a colleague you trust who will be reflective about your teaching with you, you have an opportunity that is too good to ignore.

Student interviews

Students do have great insights into how well we teach them. Under the right conditions, they are quite happy to share those insights. If you are being explicit with them about how you want teaching and learning to be in your classroom, and invite them to contribute their thinking to this as well, then periodic plenary discussions about the extent to which you and they are jointly achieving this, will give you great information on which to reflect. If you are not quite sure that you are up to this, then you might ask a colleague to interview your students on your behalf and ask them questions about how they experience all aspects of the archway.

When to reflect

Quality learning circles

One of the ways that teachers can reflect together about their practice is to set up quality learning circles in small teams or syndicates. Stewart and Prebble (1993) saw quality learning circles as a way of responding to the difficult challenge facing every school: that of improving the quality of classroom teaching. They suggest that real value could be had in teachers

observing each other's practice on a regular basis, with a focus on a narrow range of classroom behaviour, and discussing this in a supportive way. It is not problem-centred. It is about perceiving the teacher we observe as the demonstrator from whom we can all learn. The teacher is not only a person we can learn from but the observation of his/her teaching acts as a catalyst for reflective discussion.

Setting the ground rules

The establishment of a climate of trust is vital for members of quality learning circles. It is especially important for the teacher whose teaching is played for the group as a focus for discussion. Agreement reached about the discussion will help to nurture a culture of trust. Some points to consider with regard to this are:

- That the tone of discussion during quality learning circle meetings mirrors good assessment for learning practice. This means the teacher demonstrator may show the video footage and engage in reflective self-assessment, or they might introduce the video by setting out what they were trying to do and ask their colleagues to engage in peer-assessment about whether they achieved that or not. These collegial interactions are a wonderful opportunity for teachers to practise giving quality feedback.
- That the topic for discussion is the teaching of the demonstrator; it is not the person doing the teaching.
- That confidentiality is discussed. The group may agree that while the principles of excellent teaching practice may be shared outside the group, the teachers remain anonymous, or they may agree that no discussion takes place outside the group. This is particularly important in the third phase which involves feedback, discussion and reflection about observed teaching practice.

In practice

A suggested three-phase sequence:

1. Following the introduction of the selected theme, teachers talk about their interpretation of that theme as it relates to their classroom teaching and reflect on their students' achievements.
2. Input of theoretical information as it relates to classroom teaching in the form of professional readings.
3. Observation of video material of a teacher demonstrating their interpretation of the theme in their classroom practice, and discussion/reflection on what teachers have observed, what they know about their own and their colleagues' teaching.

One way to focus on student achievement is for teachers to look collaboratively at student work samples. Samples of student work give teachers concrete demonstrations of what is known and what is not known. In a practical sense, this could be as simple as regularly collecting samples of three or so target students' work and collating them over time. This authentic insight into students' learning can focus teachers on the consequences of their teaching and how the methods and techniques of assessment for learning can aid student

improvement. Directed discussions, notably quality learning circles, can give structures for these conversations.

Timperley & Parr (2004) write about the importance of professional learning communities, where groups of teachers and literacy leaders meet regularly to share ideas and support one another with a focus on raising student achievement. They also talk about the importance of teachers having powerful 'learning conversations' at each of the three stages: 'collecting evidence and mining it for information; deciding what benchmarks to use; and interpreting the evidence.'

Barriers to active reflection

In the classroom

For some teachers, valuing formal reflection enough to put time aside for it with their students is difficult. Many teachers that we work with find that building time for a plenary or conference means changing their habits. So many tell us that they mean to but the time gets away on them and the bell goes before they have managed to get to it. To describe the problem as finding time to 'fit in' a time for reflection shows that the reflection is being thought about as an 'add-on', not as an essential part of the lesson. Anything that is essential gets done, by definition. To break the habits of a lifetime, begin the next lesson with a plenary that reviews where the learning got to last time and warms the students up to what might be done next. You will find it just as effective. Then try doing it at the end of the lesson. Make it the last 10 minutes and really give students a good chance to properly reflect on an aspect of their learning.

Following a stylised 'recipe' or format for reflection can kill it dead; for example, requiring every student to make some verbal contribution to a plenary so that it takes forever, or requiring students to keep 'reflective diaries' day after day so that they get bored. Always be prepared to review your reflective practices to ensure they do serve learning.

Sometimes, as teachers are learning about reflection they come to think that it is really about finding the 'right' questions to ask students about their learning. So they start a hunt for lists of 'really good' questions that will intrigue and interest the students. This is a mistake. Reflection is about questioning what is happening, but it is not about the question. The best teachers we see are the ones who are always thinking about what is going on and checking their understanding. As you watch them working with their students you can see the reflective look on their faces as they think through everything that they are doing. They frequently check their understanding of how things are going with the students, and adjust things as the students respond. They never worry about what questions to ask because those come to them as they continually ponder 'How is it going?' The students learn great reflection from this powerful modelling.

With colleagues

Arranging time to reflect with colleagues can sometimes be a barrier. Meetings are always meetings in that they take time and detract from your ability to do other things. When formal reflections with colleagues are well run, and are addressing issues of genuine significance to you and your

colleagues, they become highly valued and treasured; other previously competing activities fall by the wayside. If your reflective sessions do not have this quality, reflect on why they are not working and solve that problem before you go back to considering problems of practice.

Sometimes schools decide to establish quality learning circles because it is fashionable or it is part of the professional development process they are currently undertaking. If teachers do not find them professionally valuable and cannot generate their own commitment to them, it is better to stop them than to continue. We know that when they go well, the enthusiasm and commitment is great. In these circumstances, the role of senior management is to ensure that they do all that is necessary to keep that commitment for professional learning. Management must be very careful not to impose formats or requirements on the quality learning circles that are counterproductive, such as requiring 'meeting minutes' to show the Education Review Office (ERO).

A teacher shares some positive feedback from students

I'm buzzing so I have to share this wee moment of celebration with you! I just did a reflection with a class I teach for Maths (not my own). They pair-shared and then I chose five children to share what went well for them in the learning today (we had already heard the things that didn't and what we can do about these tomorrow). These were the comments:

1. I got new learning.
2. I knew what I had to do.
3. I could see when I did the task that I really had got it [the new learning].
4. You explained it really well in the modelling [yay for me].
5. It was exciting to see where this learning fits in real life [I showed them their class's Box and Whisker graph results for writing as this group was doing Box and Whiskers].

They were in fluid needs-based learning groups too! All exciting — can't wait to tell you more.