Teaching and Learning Principles into Practice

User Guide

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This DVD illustrates how evidence-informed educational principles can be applied in practice through the exercise of teacher judgement.

The evidence comes from the UK's Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP) and its 23 school based projects focused on improving outcomes for learners. This work is independent of government.

The DVD provides tasters of TLRP projects in classrooms. These illustrate some of the educational principles which have been distilled from findings of all projects.

Whilst such educational principles are well established, they can be difficult to implement if teachers do not have time and space to think about them properly, and to work out how to put them into practice in their particular circumstances.

The DVD therefore invites schools and teachers to pause, take stock and ask:

- How far does our classroom practice reflect these evidence-informed educational principles?
- What could be done to improve our practice in line with these principles?
- How could we enhance the conditions to support such development?

The following pages set out some research findings in relation to the principles and suggest more specific questions for discussion after viewing the case studies. Relevant TLRP projects are also referenced.

Within the DVD, we have linked each case study to one principle but you will find that additional principles are also sometimes illustrated.

Case study 1:
Social relationships are vital to learning

What the research says

Pupils are often given tasks to do in groups. Earlier research has shown that this is often ineffective because pupils do not know how to work and learn together. This gives rise to doubts about the value of group-work. However, new TLRP research shows that when teachers take time to train pupils to work in groups this has positive effects on academic attainment, behaviour and relationships.

Questions to discuss when viewing this segment of film

❚ How are cognitive (intellectual) and affective (motivational) aspects of learning expressed and developed through social relationships?
❚ What other principles from the TLRP list are illustrated, and how are they linked to this one?
❚ How important is the subject context and could the principle be put into practice differently in other subjects?

Projects to look at

SPRinG, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2a.html

ScotSPRinG, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase111/Scot_extb.html

Case study 2:
Learning should involve and engage the learner

What the research says

Schools have changed less over the last 20 years than young peoples' life styles and expectations. Consulting pupils strengthens pupils' engagement with learning, gives teachers deeper insights into pupils' abilities and learning preferences and strengthens school policy and planning. But giving pupils a 'good listening to' challenges old habits. Therefore the development of new practices needs to be supported.

Questions to discuss when viewing this segment of film

▌ What range of strategies can be use to elicit pupils' views?
▌ How can the quiet or disaffected be heard? And how can the creation of a 'pupil voice elite' be avoided?
▌ Pupils need to know that what they say will help change things for the better.
▌ How can such authenticity be assured?

Projects to look at

Consulting Pupils, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase1/phase1dsept.html

CPAL, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/leitch.html

Case study 3:
Assessment should support learning

What the research says

Previous research has demonstrated that assessment for learning can enhance both learning and attainment. However, such practices can become ritualised and mechanistic unless teachers understand the principles of learning on which they are based. Teachers who capture the 'spirit' of AfL, not just the 'letter', reflect on their beliefs and their practices and use these techniques flexibly and purposefully to fit the flow of learning activity in their classrooms.

Questions to discuss when viewing this segment of film

▌ Two AfL practices feature in this illustration – sharing criteria and 'traffic lights'. How are these interpreted and used and what principles underpin them?
▌ How can AfL shift roles and the balance of responsibility in the classroom so that pupils take more control of their learning?
▌ What are the potential benefits and difficulties of 'learning from failure'?

Project to look at

Learning How to Learn, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2f.html

Teachers should scaffold learning with appropriate tools

What the research says

Teaching and learning involves the use of tools, including new technologies. However, ICT in the classroom will not automatically bring about improvements in learning. Teachers and pupils need to know how to choose tools and use them appropriately. The quality of teacher expertise in supporting children's use of ICT is vital to effective learning.

Questions to discuss when viewing this segment of film

- How can the focus on subject learning be maintained, whilst teaching with ICT, so that the interaction with new technologies does not become an end in itself?
- What does the teacher in the film mean when he says that it is more important to have an 'agenda' than a 'plan'? Do you agree?
- What other principles are illustrated in this segment of the film?

Projects to look at

InterActive, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2i.html

ICTIT, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/kennewell.html

Glass boxes, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/rtfbevan.html

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Case study 5:
Teaching should build on prior experience

What the research says

How schools can include all children from the communities they serve is a pressing concern although the process is not well understood. Some barriers to learning stem from teachers' misplaced assumptions about pupils. Engaging with evidence of pupils' prior experience at home, school and in their communities can help teachers to strengthen the factors that underpin achievement, such as pupils' pleasure and confidence in learning.

Questions to discuss when viewing this segment of film

▎ What range of differences among pupils are evident in this classroom and what are the challenges?
▎ How important is 'having fun' for learning?
▎ What conceptions of 'differentiation' and 'personalised learning' does this case study illustrate? Are there other interpretations? Which has most value?

Projects to look at:

Inclusive practice, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase1/phase1asept.html

Teacher engagement in inclusive practice, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/smbdavies.html

Home School Knowledge Exchange, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2e.html

Case study 6:
Teaching should equip learners for life

What the research says

Learning in school should equip children for lifelong learning as adults, citizens and workers. The ways in which pupils think about themselves, as learners in particular, is crucial. Some children develop a sense of mastery, whilst others become dependent – and classroom practice contributes to these outcomes. A key skill is to learn to 'think about thinking' (metacognition). This is developed through managed classroom talk between teachers and pupils, and when pupils talk together. However, thinking skills are not taught separately from the subject curriculum; patterns of thinking and learning in a curriculum area need to be taught together.

Questions to discuss when viewing this segment of film

▌ What indications are there of pupil perspectives of themselves as learners – of learner identities? How does the teacher work with these?
▌ How are thinking skills developed in this classroom? What are the children's reactions? How does the headteacher feel about their educational and social significance?
▌ How many other principles does this illustration incorporate (e.g. through its emphasis on structured roles in group discussion, the importance of listening, the need for the teacher to 'go with the children', transferring control to learners, etc)?

Projects to look at:

Identity and Learning Programme, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/project%20sites/ILP/index.html

ACTS II – Thinking Classrooms, see:
http://www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2g.html