

Exploring the Framework of Building Learning Power: Pigeon Mountain Kindergarten

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"Yeah. I'm practicing so when I get good I can play soccer." Boston

"I was working hard on this, so very hard." Seth

"I am learning. I am concentrating and practicing." Sophie

"Everyday I's trying a lot and I can do it now." Katie

Introducing Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power framework has evolved for us as we have worked with and given consideration to our curriculum, Te Whāriki. Te Whāriki is a socio-cultural approach to learning and teaching with play as a foundation for learning. In particular we have been looking at the importance of positive learning dispositions and children's view of themselves as capable and competent learners.

As Margaret Carr (1999, 82) says,

[D]ispositions are not just characteristic of an individual learner, [but] are part of the 'learning culture' (Bruner, 1996, p.87) that we provide, and are deeply embedded in the relationship between the learner and the learning environment.

"Dispositions are not just characteristic of the individual but are part of the learning culture we provide, and are deeply embedded in the relationship between the learner and the learning environment" (Carr 1999).

Key question...

How are we - the learning community - teachers, children and families, growing in our understanding and recognition of dispositions that are valued and how are we cultivating or enculturating this in our learning environment?

As we gave consideration to our learning environment we asked ourselves:

How are we - the learning community of teachers, children and families - growing in our understanding of dispositions that are valued, and how are we cultivating or enculturating this in our learning environment?

Tishman, Jay and Perkins' quote (1994, 150) resonated with us,

We are enculturating whether we recognize it or not, so we may as well take heed and enculture what we want.

Our goals were to enculture an environment where the development of robust dispositions is recognised, supported and explored. We had become particularly interested in the learning awareness happening for children in their play and we were documenting and sharing this learning with families and children. But we questioned how children were building an awareness of this learning and how we could know that they were building this awareness.

In 2008/2009 we were involved in the 'Learning Wisdom' research project. We were one of nine early childhood centres revisiting children's learning and engaging in conversation with children as their learning was revisited in portfolios and actively during the sessions. During this time we participated in workshops where dispositional learning and teaching was considered as well as how dispositions contribute to wise learners.

Two ideas emerged from this project for us:

1. Giving thought to the language we are using, and how this impacts on children's view of themselves as learners and the children's understanding of learning that is valued.

2. The concept of Building Learning Power. Professor Guy Claxton spoke at several of these workshops and we were introduced to his concept and framework of Building Learning Power. Excited by this framework we began to introduce the ideas into our learning setting.

[I]t is better for teachers in early childhood settings and classrooms to be explicit about valued responses and their trajectories than to leave them implicit, and therefore often unacknowledged and unattended (Claxton & Carr, 2004, 87).

As we began to implement the Learning Power framework we gave consideration to both the 4 R's of learning - Resilience, Resourcefulness, Reflecting and Relating, and to the 4 areas of teaching that have been identified as promoting Learning Power - explaining, commentating, orchestrating and modelling. We were aware that this framework was designed more specifically for the Primary and Secondary schools sector and that this would need to be modified, and the ideas played and experimented with, for our learning environment.

We introduced the concept of Learning Power to the children first by **explaining**. We used superheroes as provocation, discussed the idea of Learning Power and shared some ideas with children. We brainstormed children's ideas and began to introduce the 4 R's of learning into assessment documentation.



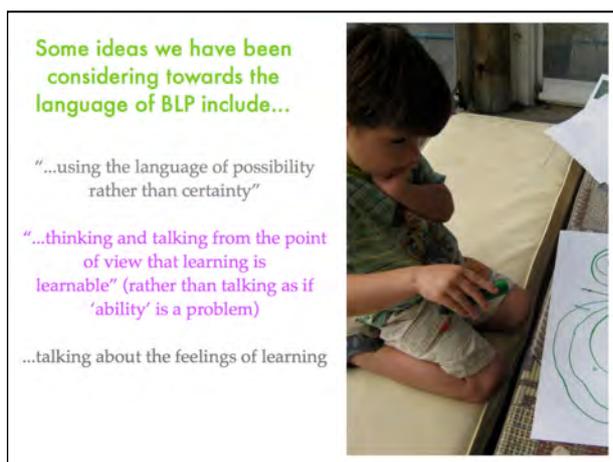
"I'm trying something new. I don't like apples but I'm trying something new." Jacob

Orchestrating, we created a display for children, parents and whanau, making the ideas, concepts, language of BLP and examples visible, and we made readings available. We linked this to Te Whāriki, because we consider the BLP framework as supporting and enhancing the learning dispositions identified as important learning outcomes.



Resilience	Resourcefulness	Reflecting	Relating
We talk about;	We talk about;	We talk about;	We talk about;
practising	trying something new	thinking	collaborating
trying hard	imagination	planning	listening
focusing	questioning	revisiting	kindness
concentrating	how we are using resources		sharing ideas
			including others

We began **modelling** the language of Learning Power. Through modelling and **commentating** 'in action', spontaneously recognising Learning Power in children's play and sharing this at group times children began to respond with interest and we began to hear children spontaneously sharing the Learning Power language. Over time we have come to recognise this here at Pigeon Mountain Kindergarten as the 'language of learning'. The Learning Power framework focus, for us, has become our consideration towards cultivating this language of learning and making this language visible.



Guy Claxton talks about the impact on students learning when teachers change their way of talking. He says that "students' attitudes can change, in turn, within a term" (2005) and this is what we noticed happening. There were some Learning Powers that children noticeably responded to straight away. For us these started with practising, concentrating, trying and collaborating. And so we would stay with these and enable children's understanding to grow. Over time we would introduce new Learning Powers to build on children's growing understanding and to support the learning environment.

Building Learning Power has now become a part of our learning culture here at Pigeon Mountain Kindergarten. Children's self assessment is becoming increasingly visible as the language of learning is shared and celebrated. And our understanding of what this looks like and how visible this has become for us all, is exciting to see. Children's positive image of their competency as learners is highlighted to us and dispositional

learning and teaching is becoming increasingly understood as meaningful and real, by children and families. These concepts and view of learning support children's life-long learning and are not just about 'preparation for school'.

References:

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