The Engaging School

A Handbook for school leaders

About the Learning Futures programme

In 2008, Paul Hamlyn Foundation (a charitable Foundation) and Innovation Unit (a social enterprise) launched the Learning Futures programme, in order to find ways to improve educational outcomes in secondary schools by increasing young people's engagement in learning.

The programme has worked with over forty schools on developing innovative methods of teaching and learning aimed at increasing student engagement in learning. Through this process, Learning Futures has developed a model for an Engaging School that both fosters student engagement, and itself engages with families, the community, and the wider world. This handbook translates the lessons and insights from 2 years of development and research from the Learning Futures programme into advice for school leaders about how their school could become an Engaging School.

"*What you see around the school is students talking differently about their learning. They talk about 'enjoying', about being empowered to go and find things out, rather than being 'spoon-fed' information. That compares with an OFSTED report six years ago that talked about students waiting to be spoon-fed rather than taking charge of their learning. Now, students talk not just about being empowered to go and find things out for themselves, but being able to think in advance about how they're going to find out what they need to learn. So teachers are facilitating learning, rather than spoon-feeding information or content.*"

ANGELA ARMYTAGE
HEADTEACHER, YEWLANDS TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

The Engaging School
A handbook for school leaders

Why read this handbook?

This handbook is designed for secondary school leaders who want their students to be much more deeply engaged in learning, their staff to be more engaging practitioners, and for their schools to be rich in engaging learning opportunities for the whole community. It is for school leaders who are prepared to radically redesign part or all of their school to achieve these ends. Finally, it is for school leaders who want to learn from the Learning Futures programme and create an Engaging School.

This handbook acts as an introduction to the ideas, processes, and models of Engaging Schools. It has not been possible to include all the resources, materials, tools and examples that could be used to create an Engaging School. Many of these are listed at the end of the handbook and can be accessed for free at www.learningfutures.org

This handbook is designed to help school leaders do a number of things:

- make the initial case for change to their school community

- articulate a vision for their school as an Engaging School and reflect on areas of strength and areas for development

- identify the necessary changes to the organisational conditions in school (the structures, norms, rules and management of time)

- plan a change process that secures the buy-in of the school community

- choose the implementation model for an Engaging School that best fits the development trajectory of their school:
  – the school within a school
  – part of the curriculum
  – one day per week
  – week-long intensives
  – the whole school

Finally, the handbook will enable school leaders to access a range of resources and materials to support them to become an Engaging School and join the Engaging Schools community.

Contents

Why we need Engaging Schools

What this section is all about

Disengagement from learning at school is a serious problem, not only for the visibly disengaged (such has those who drop out from school), but also for 'disengaged achievers' – students who are adept at achieving good grades, but are turned off learning by school, and who often struggle when given more independence at college or University or in the workplace.

This is of particular concern right now, because the world is changing rapidly. Today's students will need to be continuing to learn new skills and tackle new challenges throughout their lives, just in order to keep up with it.

Through its work with secondary schools across England, the Learning Futures programme identified four approaches to learning that foster engagement. These approaches address how, with whom, and where learning takes place – and they are at the heart of the Engaging School.

> ❝ *Learning is not a thing, it is a process... [It is important] to distinguish between contexts of productive and unproductive learning. And by productive, I mean that the learning process is one that engenders and reinforces wanting to learn more.* ❞
> SEYMOUR SARASON, 2004

The problem of disengagement, both visible and hidden

Among the world's developed countries, there is growing concern about levels of student engagement in learning at school. This manifests itself most obviously in dropout rates, in poor levels of achievement, and in disengagement with what many students perceive as a boring and irrelevant experience. Moreover, focusing on students who drop out from school masks a bigger issue, because it only takes account of the visibly disengaged.

There is a much larger group of learners who do reasonably well in school but do not become self-motivated, self-directed learners: they may succeed in exams but struggle when left to their own devices in college or University, or at work. Schools and businesses are becoming increasingly conscious of 'disengaged achievers': students who are adept at achieving high marks, but not at dealing with the more complex challenges that they will face as 21st century workers and citizens. The 21st century requires people to be adaptable, lifelong learners, and this demands a shift away from being schooled to becoming engaged learners.

How strong is the evidence that lack of engagement is a widespread problem? In the UK, former Chief Inspector of Schools, Mike Tomlinson, reported that 'over 20,000 young people in Britain each year give up on going to school by the age of 14'[1].

In research undertaken for the UK government[2] 10 per cent of British students reported that they 'hated' school. This is found in disproportionate levels amongst students from poorer backgrounds. Evidence shows that, the poorer your family, the more likely you are to be disengaged in learning at school[3].

Does engagement make a difference to achievement? Highly engaged students from poor backgrounds tend to outperform disengaged students from wealthy backgrounds.[4] Unfortunately, there are high rates of leakage among the able students from poor backgrounds: in the UK if you are a high achiever from a poor background at aged 11, you are unlikely to still be a high achiever by the time you turn 16[5]. Improved engagement could stem the flow.

1 M. Tomlinson, 'Thousands drop out of school at 14', *Daily Telegraph* (23 February 2009)
2 Department For Education, Gilby et al., *National Survey of Parents and Children: Family Life, Aspirations and Engagement with learning in 2008*
3 Canadian Educational Association, Wills et al., *What did you do in School today?* (2009)
4 OECD PISA, *Reading for Change: Performance and Engagement Across Countries* (2009)
5 The Sutton Trust, *Wasted Talent? Attrition rates for high-achieving pupils between school and university* (2008)

Poor engagement in learning is not just a problem confined to the UK, with similar data regarding disengagement found in Canada and in the US. The Canadian Education Association regularly surveys students' attitudes to school[6], and this reveals a picture of disengagement in learning getting worse as students get older. The Canadian data shows that intellectual engagement falls during the middle school years and remains at a low level throughout secondary school. This pattern is also reflected in student attendance, which falls from the age of 11 to 18[7].

The picture revealed by US research is even worse. A large-scale study – over 350,000 students in 40 States conducted by Indiana State University[8] – shows that 25 per cent of students in the class of 2008 in public high schools in the US did not graduate 'on time' (defined as 4 years after entering high school). Furthermore:

- 98 per cent of students feel bored at school at least some of the time

- Two-thirds of students feel bored every day

- Half of students have skipped school

- A quarter of students feel unchallenged by lessons

- A fifth of students have considered dropping out

The increasing global pressures on education

Moving from the micro (student experience) to the macro (changes in society) we see a broader case for change.

Education has become subject (like so much else in our lives) to **globalisation**. Today millions of students are studying outside their home countries, while online learning plays an increasingly important role in education. Moreover, education systems are now arguably more capable of comparing their performance. Educational practices are no longer a parochial concern. Globalisation of the world economy is, for most politicians, the clinching argument in the drive to transform education. Their perception is that future growth and prosperity, and our potential to overcome many of the world's problems, will depend upon the ability of education systems to produce knowledgeable citizens, consumers and workers with higher-order skills, capable of learning and adapting to an uncertain future.

There is, in addition, a subtler and perhaps more profound implication arising from globalisation: the need for 'global competence'. This requires new knowledge and skills, but also new dispositions and awareness, with significant cultural and social implications. As well as understanding other cultures, developing global competence offers up for scrutiny and questions our sense of our own identities, core values, and cultural practices. Young people's engagement in learning at school, at home, at work, and throughout their future adult lives has never been more valuable.

Naturally, the exponential rise and ubiquity of **digital technologies** has had a significant impact on the assumptions and routines of learning systems designed in the 19th and 20th centuries. Learning is a knowledge industry, and the sheer volume and accessibility of knowledge – formerly only available through restricted channels – offers new possibilities to education systems, and certainly changes the way students can and do engage in their own learning.

The case for changing the quality of young people's experience of education is strong. Our conclusion is that nothing less than a totally different approach to learning and to the design of pedagogy in school is required. Such a different approach, in turn, requires substantial and sustained changes to the ways schools are organised and the ways they operate.

While a huge burden of responsibility must rest on governments, we believe that it is possible for school leaders to transform their school's approach to learning and the design of pedagogy for their students. School leaders have the powers to reorganise the way their school operates to make more engaging learning possible. This handbook tries to set out how. But first, we describe this new approach to learning and the design of pedagogy that has been developed with schools in the Learning Futures programme.

6 Canadian Educational Association, Wills et al., *What did you do in School today?* (2009)
7 Canadian Educational Association, Wills et al., *What did you do in School today?* (2009)
8 Indiana University, *Charting the Path from Engagement to Achievement: A report on the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement* (2009)

Learning Futures: four approaches to engaging learning

The Learning Futures programme was established in order to find out more about how best to make schools more engaging places to learn. It began following the success of the Musical Futures programme, which focuses specifically on engagement in music for 11 to 16-year-old students. Learning Futures encompasses the entire secondary school curriculum.

Drawing on the experience of Musical Futures[9], as well as research into innovative practice from around the world, Learning Futures identified four approaches to designing learning that fosters student engagement. Schools from across the country were then invited to propose interventions that utilised one or more of these approaches. 15 sites (comprising a total of forty schools) were selected to participate in the programme. Based on these schools' experiences, the following four approaches were refined:

1. Using **project-based learning** that crosses subject boundaries, with students of all abilities.

2. Treating **school as a base camp** for students' learning, supporting them to learn beyond the four walls of the classroom.

3. Taking account of (and expanding) every student's **extended learning relationships** including those with their families, peers and experts from outside the school.

4. Transforming school into a **learning commons** where teachers, students, parents and local employers are active partners in designing, delivering and evaluating education.
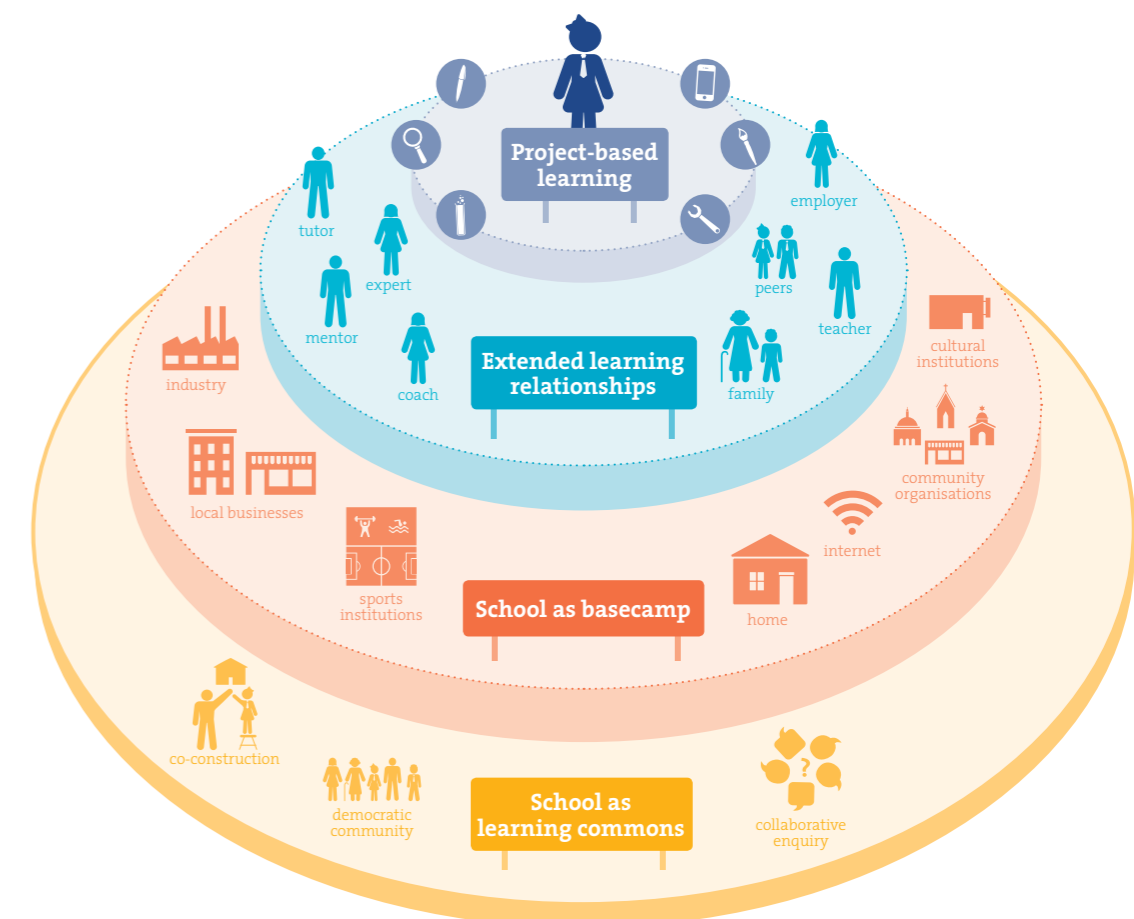
You can read an in-depth account of all four approaches in our pamphlet, *Learning Futures: A Vision for Engaging Schools*[10], but because they are the source of everything that follows in this handbook, it is worth saying a bit about each one here.

9 Musical Futures began in 2003, and by 2011 over a third of all English high schools adopt its principles and resources. You can find out more at www.musicalfutures.org.uk
10 Available for free download from www.learningfutures.org

Project-based learning is the most visible example of the pedagogical changes made by Learning Futures schools. Great student projects grow from student enquiries in order to solve real-world problems. Students find projects highly engaging because they are conducting work that is meaningful to them, and their families or communities. They relish the opportunity to make adult-world connections, work across subject disciplines, and work in extended blocks of time.

The most critical elements of project-based learning, identified by educationalist Ron Berger, are concluding a project with a public exhibition of student work, giving students an opportunity to create multiple drafts of their work before they exhibit it, and using critique protocols so that students can develop their work[11].

11 Inspired by Ron Berger's *An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship with Students.* Heinemann (2003)

The Learning Futures programme worked closely with our international partners – the High Tech High schools in San Diego, California – to apply rigour to the design and execution processes, jointly creating a teachers' guide to project-based learning[12].

Engaging Schools attend to (and expand) students' **extended learning relationships** because the best learning is inherently social. Students have a great deal to gain from working with experts in the fields they are studying, with volunteers from the local community, and with their peers. Additionally, students (and schools) can benefit tremendously when schools engage with entire families, not just with children. Learning Futures developed models of extended learning relationships including: tutors, experts, mentors and coaches.

School as basecamp represents the idea that learning within school is the starting point for learning beyond school – school is the basecamp not the summit. Engaging Schools are the places where students plan and prepare for their projects, and where students analyse and reflect on what they are learning, but learning itself is as likely to take place anywhere in the community as within the walls of the classroom. This does not simply apply to physical spaces for learning – the 'destination' for learning can be reached through digital technology too.

A **Learning Commons** is an open, curious, welcoming, democratic environment. A learning commons culture imports external ideas that challenge internal views and beliefs and, in turn, exports its students – and their assets – to the community it serves. It relentlessly questions what makes for great learning, and it shuns the professional jargon of learning so that parents can play a full part in these conversations. It sees membership in a professional learning community not as a personal opt-in, but as an essential driver for change – and it creates the necessary time and structure to support this community. A learning commons culture recognises the important part that students can play as peer enquirers/researchers, and welcomes their active involvement.

Most important to a learning commons is the belief in the principle of co-construction. The term, originally coined by Professor David Hargreaves as 'the readiness to treat students as active partners in the design, implementation and evaluation of their education', goes beyond the now fashionable concept of student voice. Co-construction requires giving students the 'ability to co-construct with others all aspects of education – teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment, indeed everything that makes up the experience of schooling'[13].

These four approaches are at the heart of the Learning Futures programme and at the heart of an Engaging School. The rest of this handbook explores the implications of these four approaches for the organisational conditions within school (Section 2); their implications for pedagogy and assessment; curriculum; teachers and students; and parents and community (Section 3); the process of becoming an Engaging School (Section 4); and different implementation models, ranging from a different approach to learning one day a week to the redesign of the whole school (Section 5). Despite the centrality of learning and pedagogy within Learning Futures and within an Engaging School, it is not where we start.

In order to create an Engaging School, leaders must make difficult and disruptive changes to the key organisational conditions in their schools: they revolutionise the culture, they significantly change the way the organisation is structured, and they radically change the way time is organised during the school day and the school year.

Only by making these bold changes to the organisational conditions, can they then enable significant and sustained shifts in how children learn, what is taught and how student achievement is measured. Ultimately it is these changed experiences for learners which affect the quality of young people's engagement in learning, and ultimately their progress to becoming successful lifelong learners.

12 *Work that Matters: The teachers' guide to project-based learning*. Paul Hamlyn Foundation/ The Innovation Unit (2012) www.learningfutures.org
13 David Hargreaves, *A new shape for schooling?* Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (2006)

Creating the organisational conditions: culture, structure and time

What this section is all about

Becoming an Engaging School is not only a question of discrete changes to teaching and learning – though these are critical. In order to create lasting change across the school, you need to transform the school's basic organisational conditions:

– school culture ('how we do things here')

– school structure (staffing structures and the visibility of practice)

– making time (the school day, week and year)

This section considers culture, structure, and time, in turn, and offers advice on how to transform each (and examples of schools that have done so). Engaging every student in their own learning requires significant changes to the way we conventionally structure the curriculum, the way teachers teach, and the way students are assessed.

However, for a school leader trying to change their school, these are not the best places to start. There have been many experiments, projects and pilots over the years which have developed new curricula, new approaches to teaching, and new ways of assessing learners. There have been new ideas, many of which have worked, that have benefitted students and convinced teachers that they are a good thing. What is remarkable is that most of these new ideas have not been sustained, they have not spread within schools or between schools, the practice hasn't deepened with time, and the ownership of the practice hasn't transferred beyond the people who came up with the idea in the first place.

One significant reason for this is that these new ideas have failed to change the organisational conditions of the whole school. They have not gone hand in hand with the systematic redesign of the school as an organisation. So much good work has been lost because it did not bring about a sustained change in the culture of the whole organisation, a new organisational structure that supported these new ways of working, and it did not result in a reorganisation in the use of time for the whole school during the school day and year.

Of all the schools we have worked with in the Learning Futures programme, it is the schools that have made the most radical changes to the organisational conditions across the whole school that have had the most success. It is the changes that they made to the culture, the structure, and the organisation of time across the whole school that made possible the design, delivery and review of more engaging learning opportunities for students[14].

They have embedded and sustained difficult and challenging new ways of teaching children, changing what they learn, and how they are assessed. Change of this depth requires strong and committed leadership. It requires school leaders prepared to rethink some of the conventional norms in school culture, who are prepared to rethink the structures that staff and students have grown used to, and are prepared to change the way the timetable and the school year has governed people's lives for many generations.

One school in the Learning Futures programme, Matthew Moss High School, epitomises this simultaneous attention to culture, structure and time (see following page):

14 We are greatly influenced by Bruce Joyce who published a revised edition of his book *The Structure of School Improvement* in 1999. In it he set out seven hypotheses for the design of alternative models of schooling. Together they are worthy of consideration by school leaders interested in creating an Engaging School. Bruce Joyce, Emily Calhoon and David Hopkins, *The New Structure of School Improvement* (1999), The Open University Press, UK

EXAMPLE: Matthew Moss High School

Matthew Moss, which serves a population with extremely high levels of deprivation, has put open enquiry and reflectiveness at its heart – both for teachers and for students.

The Senior Leadership Team at Matthew Moss began sharing articles on pedagogy with members of staff, and creating protected time to meet and discuss them. Gradually, teachers began seeking out and sharing their own articles, which has led to a culture that values learning and experimentation. In this spirit, teachers have begun using critique protocols borrowed from San Diego's High Tech High, both among themselves and with students.

For students, the expectation that they will be reflective enquirers starts in their first year, when they take part in 'My World', for which they design and carry out extended projects based on their own passions. Past students have carried out projects ranging from researching the 1947 partition of India through family history, to building a model of a 6th century monastery in Ireland, to rebuilding a disassembled car engine. Because students learn outside school and often create projects connected to their own families, parents can get involved in their children's work.

Throughout their time at the school, students take responsibility for aspects of the school that they would normally be kept away from – for example, students plan and manage their own school trips, and are taught how to make purchases using the school budget. This is both a preparation for the responsibilities of adulthood, and a way of strengthening their sense of belonging in the school.

Teachers use a mixture of assessment methods, including vivas, journals, and public project exhibitions, so that students have many ways to demonstrate their learning. These assessments are underpinned by a skills framework developed in consultation with parents, students, and local businesses, which focuses on developing students' personal organisation, problem-solving, research, teamwork, and communication skills.

Matthew Moss's Headteacher recognised that he could not just alter one aspect of the school, and expect everything else to fall in line. Instead, he transformed the culture through introducing reading and discussion groups, transformed the timetable with extended, multidisciplinary projects, and, critically, gave students a key role in deciding both what they learn, and how the school's budget is spent.

We have also been inspired by James Wetz' vision for an 'Urban Village School'[15], which derives from the work of the Human Scale Education Movement in the UK and the Small Schools movement in the United States – supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Wetz proposes a radically different model of organisational conditions (see following page).

One challenge in becoming an Engaging School is where to begin. Do you start with culture or do you start with structure? And the answer is predictable, perhaps – you have to deal with both simultaneously because they are interdependent. In this handbook we have started with cultural values and beliefs because there is logic to that in written exposition. However, within the real world of school we would suggest that living out these principles means working together in different ways – and the levers to achieve that lie in the organisational structures and enabling conditions, especially redesigning the use of time that creates new habits of practice that, in turn, create new cultural norms.

15 James Wetz, *Urban Village Schools* (2009). Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

EXAMPLE: The Urban Village School

The design and organisation of the school year, the school term, and the working week is the framework for the provision of learning.

The school year proposed [below] asks students to attend to their learning in six-week terms with a two-week break between each term and a slightly longer four-week break in the summer – concentrated periods of study linked with periods of relaxation, but not so long that there will not be a sense of continuity and application.

The two-week breaks for students will also enable the staff group to meet in two-day residential retreats ahead of each term to reflect on the work of the school and the students' engagement.

• Six terms per year, each term lasting six week.

• Two-week holidays between each term and four weeks at the end of the school year in the summer.

• Two-day staff residential meetings prior to each term.

• One day a week set aside for training, professional development and supervision, collaborative planning and reflection.

• The working week organised around three programmes:
  1. the Learning Programme (three days)
  2. the Assessment Programme (one day)
  3. the Community Programme (one day)

The school day is eight hours, from 10am to 6pm. The late start partly acknowledges the research of Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom and her colleagues at the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota into the body rhythms of adolescents. It also allows attachment workers to engage with families before the start of the day and for staff to meet together each day.

The later finish reflects the fact that all homework will be 'schoolwork', done in school time and supported by staff or other adult supporters. At the end of each day, the students will leave school knowing that they have done a good day's work, that this work is taken seriously by the staff, and that they do not have to take work home with them.

These programme arrangements allow for 20 per cent of a teacher's time each week to be used for collaborative planning, design of activities, reflection on teaching and learning, visits to other schools, consultation and supervision.

School Culture

There is a compelling case for changing the organisational conditions in schools. But what kind of a new school are we trying to create? Below we consider the importance of the culture of a school seeking to engage its members deeply, the values from which that culture emerges, and the organisational conditions which express it. From that we derive a set of **design principles** to guide school leaders in the re-design of their own school. In later sections, these design principles are explored in further depth and illustrated by existing practices.

An Engaging School needs a school culture that is supportive, facilitative and congruent with the design principles it wishes to realise. If the culture is antithetical or oppositional, then you won't be able to put these design principles into practice.

Culture itself will be related to a set of values, explicit and implicit[16]. Here, we set out the values that we believe underpin Engaging Schools, not because we think they should be imposed, because they cannot. Instead, we think that every school community should question and explore its own values.

The values that underpin engaging schools:

1. All students can become **deeply engaged learners**

2. Deeply engaged learning leads to higher **student achievement**

3. Engagement increases the more **students personalise and manage their learning**

4. **Involving students, parents and the community in assessment** increases engagement and drives achievement

5. Engaging learning comes from **integrating subjects** and disciplines

6. Engaging learning is much more likely when **students feel that their teachers know and understand them** as individuals

7. Teachers' most valuable expertise is in the **design of great pedagogy**

8. Engaging **learning continues beyond the school gate** and the school day

9. Students' engagement in learning is best supported when their **parents and community are engaged** alongside them.

16 We use the term culture, then, as a shorthand for the multiple components that make up the norms, behaviours, relationships, shared expectations, symbols, rituals, decision-making processes, and permissions that pervade a school

An Engaging School needs, as a whole-school community, to be able to express each of these values and enact them. It has to be able to work out its own articulation of these values. Enacting these values is a critical part of creating the culture of an Engaging School. In trying to enact these values, we have learned from experience how important it is to change the way staff learn, to reflect the way a school wants students to learn.

If there is one point that is being made above all others in this part of the handbook, it is that to create a culture of engaging learning for students you have to create a culture of engaging learning for staff too. And that means quite radical changes to the organisational structures that govern the ways staff work and learn.

To create an Engaging School, school leaders have to break the traditional structures of training and courses, of expert-led activities, one-shot events, departmental meetings and staff meetings, of staff rooms, and departmental offices. These traditional staff learning structures should be progressively replaced with an alternative paradigm that is about a more holistic design of school as a place where learning is endemic, and is viewed as a sustained collaborative enquiry towards the school's educational mission. It is about staff sharing a common intellectual mission; a school viewing its practice as a subject of sustained study, its members as a source of learning, its context as a unique environment for the application of learning, and the public knowledge base beyond the school as a rich source of stimulus and expertise to be drawn in.

It feels like a paradox, therefore, to have a section like the one that follows, which offers practical examples and activities. However, it is hard to imagine ourselves fully in a possible future – we need practical examples and places to get started. More significantly, perhaps, we need a set of collaborative activities that can demonstrate the power of the approach and at the same time begin to move the culture towards collaborative interdisciplinary learning. It is in this spirit that we, therefore, offer some illustrative examples (see next page).

Our driving hypothesis is that if students are more engaged in their learning they will be more active as learners, achieve better and be more likely to want to continue learning beyond school. This seems self-evident, but we need to apply the same logic to adults.

EXAMPLES

USE PROTOCOLS TO SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Following a strict protocol can be very helpful to collaborative adult learning activities, both because protocols provide a rigorous structure for discussion, and because they help ensure that everyone has the opportunity to make their voice heard. We recommend a book, *The Power of Protocols*[17], which offers multiple examples that can be customised by schools for their own use.

STUDY VIDEO EXTRACTS OF REAL TEACHING IN YOUR SCHOOL

It is so easy now to video components of lessons, and it is a way of bringing real practice to the table in conversations with colleagues. The subject of the video (the teacher being filmed) can host the activity, and a professional development designer can help him/her to design the activity. It may feel awkward to begin with, but very quickly the culture will change.

USE IN-HOUSE TEACHMEET WORKSHOPS

The protocols of TeachMeet are available on their site (teachmeet.pbworks.com) but the protocols essentially comprise guidelines for a 2 minute and 7 minute sharing marketplace, which celebrates whatever teachers want to bring to the table to share with colleagues.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING FOR STAFF

At one school, all staff undertake a two-day project-based learning odyssey together before the school year begins, where they do a project that will be used with students in the curriculum. They receive peer-critique during the project and use tools that can be used with students to support the work. They work in interdisciplinary groups. They have to generate an exhibition. Their work is assessed by both staff and students using assessment rubrics. Useful guidance, protocols, and templates can be found in *Work that matters: The teacher's guide to project-based learning*[18].

(CONTINUED)

ARRANGE STUDY VISITS TO SITES OF EXCELLENCE

Obviously such visits (undertaken by twos and threes of staff, not individuals) are of value in their own right. However they are far more powerful when they are prompted by the needs of an internal enquiry and development activity, when the means by which the learning is going to be made widely available internally are known in advance, and when the group undertaking the visit is empowered to take actions based on the implications of their learning.

CREATE ENQUIRY TEAMS

One school has an afternoon each week for collaborative professional learning. All staff join an enquiry group, building knowledge and practice in a key aspect of pedagogy, and these afternoons are used as times to engage in the work, to share with others, to reallocate tasks and roles, etc.

INVITE LESS EXPERIENCED TEACHERS TO RUN STAFF WORKSHOPS FOR ALL STAFF

This has multiple benefits. It communicates the value of fresh perspectives and outside knowledge, allows new staff to feel like contributors early in their time at the school and allows staff to be generous in acknowledging new peer expertise. It makes new staff immediately known.

17 J. McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, and E. McDonald, *The Power of Protocols: An Educator's Guide to Better Practice* (2003). Teachers College Press.
18 *Work that matters: The teacher's guide to project-based learning*. Paul Hamlyn Foundation / The Innovation Unit (2012). www.learningfutures.org

School Structure

There are many problems with the prevailing structural arrangements in secondary schools, and with the consequent cultural norms. Here, we explore two such structural problems: the first is the powerful dominance of curriculum subjects as the main basis for organising the school; and the second is the invisibility of professional practice.

Curriculum subjects in secondary schools have long shaped how learning time is deployed on the timetable. It is one thing to divide the curriculum offer into subjects in this way, but it is yet another to allow subjects to then determine the way in which schools are structured internally. This, in turn, defines which teachers engage with one another and with whom pedagogy is designed. It affects who selects and inducts teachers, which team they join, where they teach in the school building, their status in the school, their professional identity – even future career prospects.

Subjects have proved to be a very durable feature of schools. Prospective secondary school teachers are trained to teach subjects, in subject-organised departments of university education faculties. There are strong vested interests in Subject Associations, Examination Boards and Universities. Parents, employers, and politicians are attracted to the familiarity of subjects.

So, subjects really matter in schools, and the subject-based orientation to the secondary school curriculum is here to stay. However, subjects should not dominate the whole world of learning in school. Subjects certainly shouldn't get in the way of engaging learning experiences for students – or for staff.

Engaging Schools find ways for subject-based teaching and more integrated project-based learning to co-exist. Our experience has taught us that students require both – access both to the knowledge and disciplines of subjects, and to project-based learning designs that integrate subjects in engaging and meaningful ways. Designing great interdisciplinary projects is liberating for staff and transformative for the learning culture in a school. To do this well requires organisational structures that counter rather than reinforce the dominance of subjects.

Most schools in the Learning Futures programme have adopted an approach that views the curriculum as being a combination of subject-based teaching and integrated, project-based learning. In an Engaging School, whilst typically a significant proportion of the timetable will continue to be taught in subjects, there will be a roughly equal proportion taught in interdisciplinary projects. These projects might be taught as a proportion of the timetable each week, or they might be blocks of time (say six separate weeks of 'intensives') during the school year.

The second structural limitation to be addressed by school leaders is the relative invisibility of professional practice. This single feature alone precludes sustained learning from each other's teaching, or collaborative reflection on aspects of practice because there is so little shared experience. It also makes the implementation of new practices extremely hard to achieve with any consistency. Many curriculum development programmes create exciting new designs that are then utilised differentially at the classroom level – sometimes even undermined by individual teachers.

Engaging Schools strive to make classroom practice open and visible and the subject of study, to make teaching a team activity rather than a private act, by changing the structures in which teachers teach. There are a variety of ways of doing this but, clearly, changing the physical structures within the school is an amazing opportunity to change the way people work, relate, and learn together. This does not require new buildings – existing classrooms can be radically repurposed by consciously creating different zones within the classroom, set up for different types of pedagogic design, as is commonplace in nursery and primary school.

Documenting and sharing classroom practice is also critical. One school in the Learning Futures programme has invested particularly heavily in this, hiring in-house web designers with responsibility for making sure that all projects and teacher-led enquiries are made public on the school's intranet. Other schools are taking a more low-tech (but no less powerful) approach, embedding disciplined critique and discussion sessions into the school day so that teachers have a chance to share their work and improve it together[19].

19 For more on how to run effective staff critique sessions, see the material on 'project tuning' in *Work that Matters: The Teacher's Guide to Project-based Learning* (download from www.learningfutures.org)

The essential points are simple:

- Create organisational and physical structures that are designed to build a culture of collaboratively-designed pedagogy involving teachers and students.

- Do it through creating shared norms and through collective responsibility for each other's learning.

- Use every opportunity to make practice open, visible, shared, and the subject of creative reflection.

- Experiment with new design features with the specific purpose of exciting and stimulating staff around their own learning.

- Reduce teacher isolation.

- Make teaching an intellectual and creative pursuit that will stretch and excite high quality graduates with a passion for changing students' lives together.

The emotional health of a school – the quality of internal relationships, the sense of collective agency; the passion for the work – is as important to its resource richness as any of the cultural dimensions we described. We believe there are five key advantages characteristic of the schools who have implemented the Learning Futures approach well:

1. There is a clear 'alignment advantage' when staff are brought together around a shared pedagogical mission. Alignment and synergy are huge resource optimisers.

2. There is a distinct 'collaborative advantage' arising from work norms that bring teachers together to problem solve, build each other's capacity, learn from one another and reflect on practice together.

3. There is a 'discretionary effort advantage' when staff are lit up by their work and by students' engagement with teachers' learning designs.

4. There is a 'social advantage' in schools where staff share the intellectual mission and take joy in working with one another to achieve it – and where students are invited to be conscious partners in the enterprise.

5. There is an 'intellectual advantage' when the profession becomes something that engages teachers as designers of learning and engages school leaders as designers of schools.

The precious resources of social and intellectual capital just might be the richest vein to which a school has access, one whose limits may only be the extent of our imaginations and the limits of our professional generosity.

EXAMPLE: Transforming Learning Spaces at Cramlington Learning Village

At Cramlington Learning Village the newly-built Junior Learning Village has a number of design characteristics to facilitate both collaborative practices and high visibility. All classrooms are configured around a shared, open-plan learning area that makes access to and from learning spaces easy. The humanities area has been designed for classrooms of 50 students and two teachers. Staff design and teach in pairs, sharing the lead and support roles. Most sessions also have one or two support staff so that the mix is likely to be 50 students and four adults. This also makes in-lesson reflection and refinement of practice very easy. So, not only do staff get to observe one another's teaching and facilitation, but also there are continuous opportunities to engage in dialogue about what is working, what needs to be refined, etc.

The Junior Learning Village science area is a similar but different design. Here four open plan classrooms are configured around a central shared area, so that all staff can observe one another and there is flow between classroom areas. The four staff who teach together plan projects and enquiries, and the central space allows for keynote inputs to the four classes. There are multiple opportunities for staff to support one another, to engage in peer coaching and to discuss together their shared experience of teaching. The open display areas again bring the classes together so that students can learn from each other's work and can engage in peer critique and peer assessment activities.

Making time

Some years ago Michael Fullan opened one of his conferences by saying:

" You know, the trouble with all this school change stuff is that there's never enough time to do it effectively. Well let me tell you now that there is never going to be any more time, so if we don't start redesigning it, then we'll be complaining about the lack of it for ever. "

The timetable, or schedule, is one of the most readily available tools for redesigning how time is used in schools. It is the means by which a school can design and achieve its objectives with regard both to deployment of staff time, and the creation of different lesson times for students. In that sense it offers infinite possibilities, and multiple permutations and variations.

Unfortunately, most schools utilise the same model as the previous year and the timetable is used as a constraint rather than a creative tool. Most schools see the timetable as having an annual cycle – a relatively inflexible constraint once it is set in place at the start of the year. In contrast, there are schools we visited that re-design the timetable each half term, viewing the curriculum as an evolving set of learning experiences. Apart from these devices, there are US and UK examples (Charter Schools and Academies respectively) emerging of different patterns to the learning week and year.

Short lessons of an hour or so are antithetical to deep learning, and to transfer of ownership of learning from teachers to students. Engaging Schools creatively use longer time periods (2, 3 or 4 hour units) in the school day to allow for deep learning and a greater diversity of learning designs. For the same reasons, they also design student projects over longer time scales; typically 6, 8 or 12 weeks.

Reorganising time in school not only changes the students' experience of learning, it changes the possibilities for adult learning as well. Currently, most teachers are precluded from effective forms of professional learning because 'there simply isn't time'. Engaging Schools want to address this fault-line by designing into the organisational arrangements, as non-negotiable opportunities for collaborative working. Our partner schools have demonstrated that it is within the scope of UK schools to achieve this:

- Two schools have an hour of staff learning before school each morning. This includes collaborative planning time, and watching videos of each other teaching in order to discuss their practice. They have found that staff learning before school time is more productive than at the end of the day.

- One school closes at lunchtime on Wednesday, and the afternoon is dedicated to staff planning, enquiry teams and collaborative design work.

- One school timetables teaching teams together for an extra lesson when they are not teaching, so that there is weekly planning, reflection and review time.

- One school has an activities afternoon for students run by community volunteers, which releases staff for collaborative learning.

- A number of schools use examination time in the summer to re-timetable, putting planning teams together for extended and intensive sessions.

- One school puts collaborative planning times for teams of teachers onto the timetable first, before starting to timetable teaching commitments.

- One school has as its primary performance management objective for all staff 'the extent to which they have contributed to the learning of other teachers'.

EXAMPLE: Brooklyn Generation School[20] – a school for 14 to19 year olds in New York City's Flatbush neighbourhood

All students have two 85-minute 'Foundations' courses in mathematics and humanities every morning. These classes cover English, integrated algebra, global studies, US history and living environment. Students are frequently regrouped according to assessment results.

Students have three 'Studio' courses each afternoon. These 60-minute classes cover other sciences, advanced maths, foreign languages, electives, enrichment activities, mandated services and data-informed special support.

Teachers have a dual focus, teaching two Foundations courses each morning and one Studio course each afternoon.

These teachers have a 120-minute common planning block with same-grade, same-subject colleagues each afternoon, and use it to plan curriculum units and assessments together, to evaluate students' progress, share effective teaching strategies, and design different approaches. These sessions build an ethos of peer-driven learning and accountability.

There are extracurricular activities after hours, which are optional for students and staff.

Twice a year, core faculty members take a one-month break, consisting of three weeks' vacation and a week of collaborative professional development with their teaching team.

During these months, a different cadre of educators steps in to teach month-long 'intensives' focused on college and career readiness, project-based learning and internships. Students get up close and personal with different community locations and career opportunities.

The school year is longer for students – 200 days – but because of the staggered schedule, no faculty members teach more than 180 days. The schedule has the blessing of the teachers union, and stays within the regular staffing rules for New York City high schools.

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20 Brooklyn is a member of Generation Schools Network, dedicated to systemic innovation in urban public education, in particular by experimenting with the use of time and the deployment of professional and non-professional staff in ways that reduce conventional class size. See www.generationschools.org

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What all these examples illustrate is a commitment to prioritising staff learning. Some are clearly more significant then others. By far the most potent is the model that builds staff learning time into the daily rhythm of school, and which uses it well, as illustrated in the following vignette from one of Learning Futures' international partners, High Tech High (see below).

In part, this is enabled by the common hour – which is a major school redesign feature of the High Tech High schools. In part, though, it is also cultural. They take seriously the responsibility to learn from, with and on behalf of one another. As one High Tech High principal says: '*We expect each other to be excellent, and we take collective responsibility for enabling each other to be excellent.*'

In the sections that follow, under the familiar categories of pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment you will find that again and again, changes in the organisational conditions above are referred to. This cannot be left to classroom teachers. School Leaders need to intentionally reshape the culture, the organisational structures and use of time. We give examples of how schools are doing this in practice: daunting though they may sound, these changes are being enacted in many schools, facing a range of constraints and challenges.

We have referred above to the leadership task of reshaping or redesign. In common with many others working in the public services, professionals in education are reconceiving of themselves as designers of those services. This is not just a metaphor. The task of creating an Engaging School depends upon the ability to realise a set of design principles, derived from the values set out above, and the emerging practice knowledge base from around the world. For ease of reference they are set out here. Subsequent sections of this handbook spell out the implications.

EXAMPLE: High Tech High

The High Tech High schools, in San Diego, California, use the daily hour that staff have together before lessons in a variety of ways. For teaching purposes, staff are paired in project-based learning teams (two staff to 50 students), and some of the mornings are used for these pairs to design and refine pedagogical strategies and materials, or to talk about students. They also use peer-critique protocols to present their designs to invited staff and to incorporate colleagues' advice and suggestions – project designs are never implemented without peer critique. They have reading groups and study teams. They video teaching (or ask students to video the lessons) and then they study each other's practice together. They share successful practices and great ideas using TeachMeet-type[21] forums. They pose pedagogical challenges and invite collaborative peer solutions. In essence they learn together in a sustained way, problem-solving their 'common intellectual mission', taking seriously both the progressive evolution of practice and the need for this to be shared knowledge across the school.

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21 The TeachMeet site can be accessed at www.teachmeet.org.uk

Design Principles for Engaging Schools

What this section is all about

This section articulates a set of design principles for Engaging Schools:

Pedagogy and Assessment Design Principles

Engaging Schools are committed to rigorous project-based learning.

Engaging Schools rebalance student enquiry and transmission teaching.

Engaging Schools maximise time for deep learning by simplifying the timetable.

Engaging Schools use authentic real-world assessment.

Curriculum Design Principles

Engaging Schools integrate curriculum subjects within student projects.

Engaging Schools have a curriculum which integrates head and hand – knowing and doing.

Teachers and Students Design Principles

Teachers in Engaging Schools plan, design and teach in teams.

Teachers in Engaging Schools really know their students as individuals, and students feel known as learners.

Students in Engaging Schools feel a sense of ownership and take responsibility for their learning.
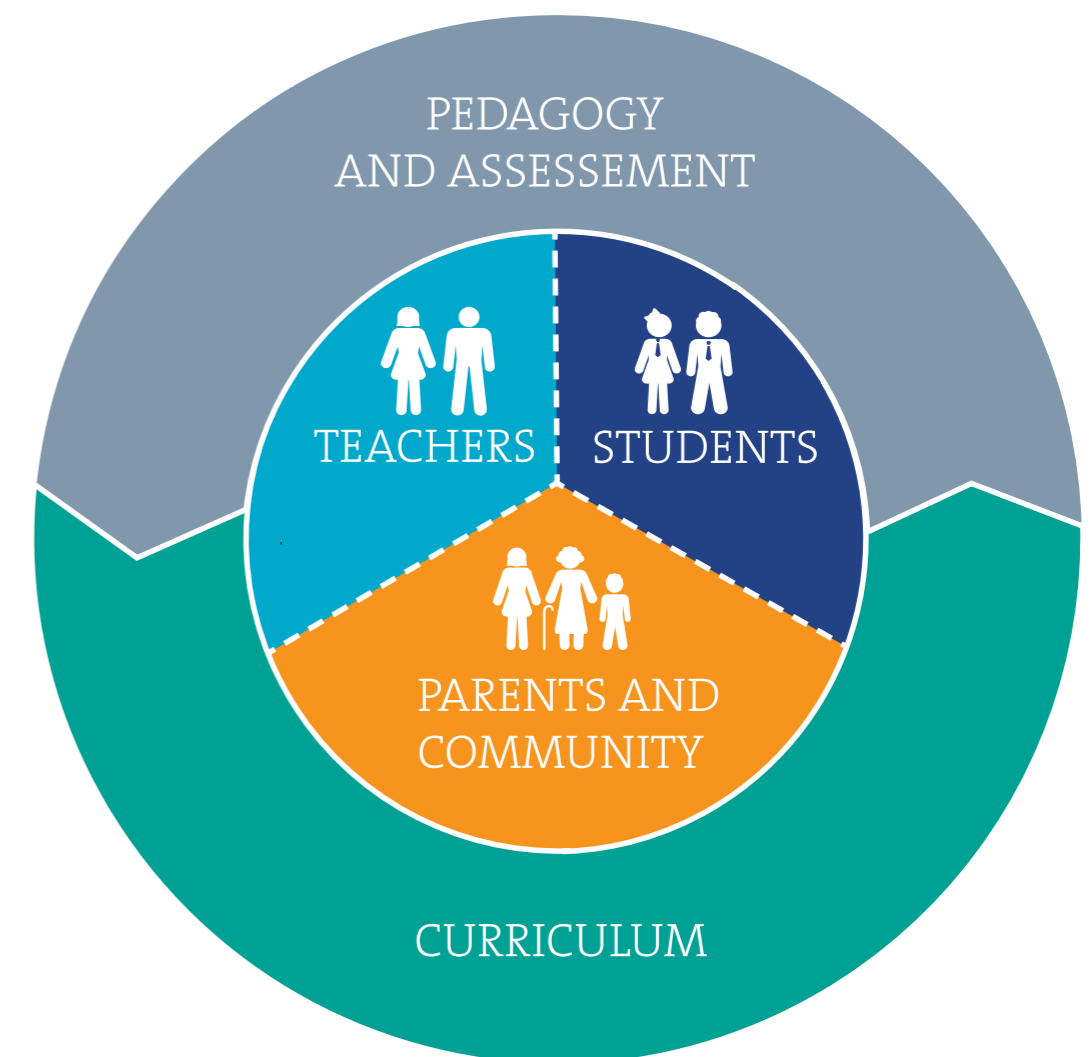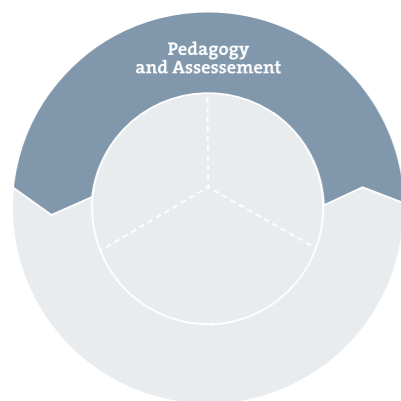
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Parents and Community Design Principles

Engaging Schools persuade local organisations to provide authentic locations and opportunities for learning.

Engaging Schools actively involve parents and volunteers as tutors, experts, mentors and coaches.

Engaging Schools work in partnership with parents and respect them as the primary educators of their children.

PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSEMENT

TEACHERS

STUDENTS

PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

CURRICULUM

Pedagogy and Assessement

Engaging Schools

- rebalance student enquiry and transmission teaching
- organise the curriculum principally through project-based learning
- change the timetable to maximise time for deep learning
- use authentic real-world assessment

1. Pedagogy and Assessment

Engaging Schools are committed to rigorous project-based learning

We have found that project-based learning is the most engaging pedagogical design. It is more comprehensive than many of the alternatives, and encompasses lots of different ways of teaching and learning that have a strong evidence base, such as enquiry-based learning, problem solving, and traditional instruction. Using these methods within project-based learning gives students a sense of agency; it gives them a belief that the results matter, that their learning is purposeful. This sense of purpose comes through producing work products of real value, and presenting them to an external audience beyond the school.

At the centre of our approach to project-based learning are three simple but powerful concepts[22]:

- **Exhibition** – presenting the output of your project at a public event, to which teachers, students, families and members of the local community are all invited.

- **Multiple drafts** – making several draft versions of your project output, in order to make sure the final version is as high quality as possible.

- **Critique** – using protocols, so that students can have structured discussions about which aspects of their peers' work are most effective, and how they can be improved.

Of these three concepts, exhibition is the most fundamental. It changes the nature of the project from the moment students start working – because they know they will need to literally 'stand by' their work, under scrutiny and questioning from family, friends and total strangers. This inspires a level of ambition and commitment much greater than is fuelled by the incentive of getting good marks.

This heightened ambition is enabled by producing multiple drafts, because it allows students to engage more deeply in their work, and to internalise an expectation that they need to (and are able to) produce work of a high standard. Critique goes hand in hand with multiple drafts, giving students an opportunity to learn from each other's work and from each other's feedback in a structured, safe context. In addition, bringing in professionals from outside school to critique students' work can be especially powerful.

When students are working on projects, they are not only learning science, history or music but learning how to be scientists, historians and musicians.

Designing projects around the passions of teachers and students builds enthusiasm and ownership. Their learning matters more to them. Projects with real-world connections engage students. Project-based learning gives students a greater say and more choice in what is studied and how it is taught. Students have a legitimate role in the design, delivery and outcomes of projects. This builds their ownership of their own learning.

For more information about project-based learning, see our companion publication, *Work that Matters: The Teacher's Guide to Project-based Learning* (download from www.learningfutures.org).

Engaging Schools rebalance student enquiry and transmission teaching

There is no sense in which we advocate a return to discovery learning, where teachers cede all responsibility for learning to students. It makes sense for teachers to deploy their expert subject knowledge appropriately – we must not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Moreover, powerful research evidence now exists[23] on the optimal roles for teachers to adopt in the active facilitation of students' learning. When students are engaged in extended, challenging projects driven by their own enquiries, teachers need to adopt a variety of roles to support deep learning. Sometimes the teacher will act as an advisor, sometimes as a facilitator to help groups work more effectively together, and sometimes the teacher will use traditional transmission teaching. Transmission teaching is often necessary to support rigorous project-based learning. However, one would expect teachers to spend less time using transmission teaching in the context of project-based learning, than in a more traditional classroom.

22 These are taken from Ron Berger's *An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship with Students*. Heinemann (2003)

23 John Hattie, *Visible Learning* (2009)

SECTION 3

Engaging Schools maximise time for deep learning by simplifying the timetable

One of the main barriers to deep learning and to teacher collaboration is the virtually ubiquitous one-hour lesson. To counter this, many of the schools in the Learning Futures programme are exploring different units of time for lessons. A simple move to a 10-lesson week (2 half-day lessons per day) opens up multiple possibilities to deepen learning and make community-based or community-engaged learning much more feasible. One school uses these half-day blocks for faculties, who then own the time and can choose to have one-hour lessons some of the time for more traditional teaching and use half days at other times.

A number of schools in the Learning Futures programme have introduced some whole-day lessons, offering up to 40 whole-day sessions in one year. Block weeks (between three and six whole-week units each year) allow for the design of project-based learning, community-based projects, internships or fieldwork enquiries. Some schools use these weeks for community-action projects. One school includes a residential, learning-camp week for the whole of its Year 7, with Year 11 students taking on leadership and co-tutoring roles.
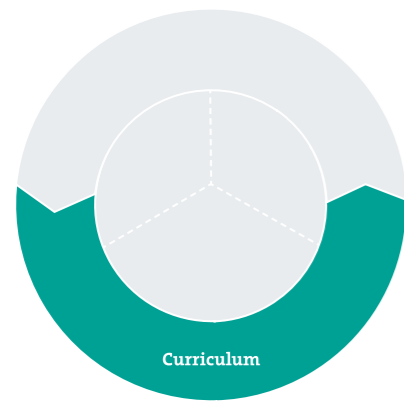
Engaging Schools use authentic real-world assessment

The essential characteristic of powerful assessment is that it is an integral component of learning. Formative assessment should be integrated into traditional classroom teaching and project-based learning. It should be a part of peer teaching, peer-critique, and student self-assessment. Students need a language of assessment as much as they need a language of learning.

In Engaging Schools, assessment is owned by the students who are being assessed. For assessment to really drive future learning, assessment criteria need to be understood and to really matter to the students being assessed. The most engaging means of doing this is for the learner to co-construct the assessment criteria with teachers. Where parents and community members are involved in project-based learning, their involvement in assessment secures their understanding and their involvement.

A key component of this is the creation of authentic assessments using external audiences with a real-world interest in the products of students' learning. This means that businesses, community organisations, experts, parents and local residents are all potentially assessors and examiners of student work. Obviously, other teachers and students in the school community can provide authentic assessment too.

Engaging Schools use exhibitions, portfolios, performances, applied demonstrations, installations, publications and micro-enterprises as potential modes of assessment. Of course, they also use external examinations and qualifications, but these tend to come at the end, rather than during, the learning process.

SECTION 3

Engaging Schools

- using project-based learning to integrate curriculum subjects

- integrate 'head and hand' – knowing and doing

Curriculum

2. Curriculum

Engaging Schools integrate curriculum subjects within student projects

The first thing to say is that most of the schools we have worked with in the Learning Futures programme have adopted an approach which views the curriculum as being a combination of subject-based teaching and integrated project-based learning. The schools that have gone the furthest in replacing nearly all subject-based teaching with integrated projects are small schools. Why? Because small schools don't have the breadth of subject specialist teachers to organise their curriculum, timetable and staffing structure into different subjects. In small schools, in both the UK and US, integrated and interdisciplinary teaching is the norm, because it has to be the norm.

So in an Engaging School, while typically a significant proportion of the timetable will continue to be taught in subjects, there will be a roughly equal proportion taught in interdisciplinary projects. Integrating multiple curriculum subjects requires a completely different model of planning and design for teachers. Some schools start by pairing subjects such as Humanities and English, or Science and the Arts. Others have much broader scope. Some use skills and competencies as the way of organising their curriculum. This approach offers a way in which staff from different disciplines can design and facilitate students' learning together.

At Matthew Moss School in Rochdale, two days a week are given over (in Years 7, 8 and 9) to integrated project-based learning entitled 'My World'. At Cramlington Learning Village in Northumberland, the school year contains a number of weeks where Years 7 and 8 experience whole-week activities, projects, and community-based learning experiences. At High Tech High, every day contains four hours of project-based learning on projects that might last for many weeks.

Critics of project-based learning often cite the need to cover curriculum content as a reason for not using it in school – especially where external tests feature. In fact, good project-based learning begins with the needs

and passions of the learners, but also ensures that the learning designs incorporate all necessary content. The increased motivation and engagement that come with a purposeful authentic project results in students digging deeper into the requisite knowledge – the students producing a remembrance publication about World War Two survivors understand the need to get their facts right before interviewing war veterans. Increased engagement and deeper learning do not limit the coverage of the curriculum.

Engaging Schools have a curriculum that integrates 'head and hand' – knowing and doing

In a conventional school curriculum there is remarkably little doing, and much less applying of learning to real-world situations. Where there is more application and 'doing' it tends to be in particular subjects, like the arts, or design technology, or physical education, rather than the application of knowledge and skills, from a range of different subjects and disciplines, to more complex and challenging situations.
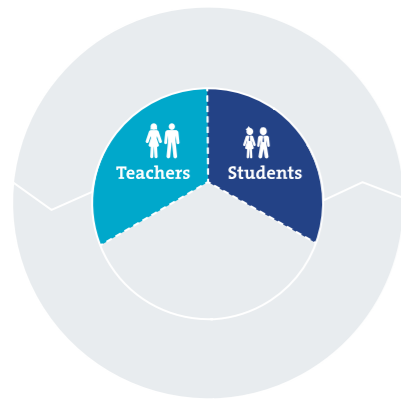
Interdisciplinary project-based learning offers an alternative approach, in which both knowing and applying that knowledge is equally important – utilising both head and hand, just as in the real world.

Making and doing things is a very engaging way of learning – and engaging learners is a priority for Learning Futures schools. It has long been understood that it is also a route to deep learning. As John Dewey said, 'profound understanding derives from activity'[24]. The motto of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, one of the world's most respected universities, is *Mens et Manus*, which translates as 'mind and hand'. The educational ideals of MIT's founders were about promoting, above all, education for practical application.

So, for example, when student groups are set the project of designing and initiating a campaign to increase the number of blood donors in their locality, it offers abundant scope for both head and hand. Examples of content elements might include the history of blood donation, the science involved, data gathering and data analysis, the economics involved, the human stories, blood donation by geography and by social class, international comparisons etc. The doing part could involve community-based surveys, interviews with donors and recipients, materials development, poster creation, video-making, campaign design and implementation, creating advocacy from local businesses etc.

The point, though, is not the specifics, so much as the potential for academic rigour, deep engagement, and learner agency – making learning work in very real ways; involving head and hand.

24 Quoted in the interview with High Tech High's CEO, Larry Rosenstock, on the Edutopia website bit.ly/wW601P

Teachers

- plan, design and teach in teams
- really know their students as individuals

Students

- take responsibility for their own learning

3. Teachers and Students

Teachers in Engaging Schools plan, design, and teach in teams

Collaborative planning by teachers is most powerful when it brings together teachers from different disciplines to share their expertise, when it builds from team teaching, when it includes reflection on one another's practice, and when teachers talk in detail about the learning of individual students.

Engaging Schools expect teachers to work collaboratively, to engage in peer critique and challenge, to support each other's development and professional learning, and to share responsibility for each other's success – after all we expect the same of students. As a principle, this is hugely powerful. Engaging Schools do not tolerate disengaged teachers or mediocre practice. A mutual expectation of teaching excellence combined with shared responsibility to help each other to be outstanding teachers, is a hallmark of a strong, professional school culture.

Teachers who work in Engaging Schools are committed to evidence-informed practice, to keeping up to date with the research knowledge-base in education, and they are committed to contributing to that knowledge base through action research. Although subject knowledge is important, the primary expertise of teachers in Engaging Schools is knowledge of pedagogy – knowing how to design and facilitate great learning experiences for young people.

Teachers in Engaging Schools really know their students as individuals, and the students feel known as learners

In an Engaging School teachers work more intensively with fewer students than in other schools. The result is that they understand their students and their learning needs better. This is not possible in a school where teachers have to teach 200 or more individual students each week.

Another route to ensuring that every child is really known by the adults in the school is to increase the faculty to include all the adults working in the building. Some of the schools in the Learning Futures programme have small tutor groups or advisories run by teachers and other staff, where every adult member of staff has a group of 12 to 15 students of all ages. This requires significant whole-staff professional development, and includes all staff in the cultural norm of talking about student achievement and individual needs. Some include all staff in the building in the design and support of pedagogy – made both feasible and desirable when students are engaging in community-based learning programmes.

The point here is, of course, about multiplying the number of adults within school, who are available to engage with, and add value to, each young person's learning. It is about increasing the range of sources of support, in order to enrich learning.

Students in Engaging Schools feel a sense of ownership and take responsibility for their learning

In an Engaging School, the ways in which the school's curriculum and pedagogy are designed not only allow but demand that students take responsibility for their own learning within and beyond school. They foster high degrees of learner ownership. This is the most powerful approach to personalised learning we have seen. Teachers cannot be expected to personalise the learning of every student as effectively as the students themselves. A teacher's role is to build learner ownership and responsibility, and support students to personalise learning for themselves.

In an Engaging School, students are engaged learners, committed to supporting each other's learning, and their teachers' own learning. To that end, they are invited to provide critical and supportive feedback through a range of processes, including student enquiries into teaching and learning, classroom observation, school democracy and participation in teacher action research. Digital technology makes this engagement more achievable than ever before. In particular, mobile devices, such as tablets and smartphones, provide students with the means to carry out research, ask questions of each other and their teachers, and provide commentary, feedback and advice at all times, whether in or out of school. Around the world, more and more schools are utilising mobile devices to these ends, seeing that they provide an opportunity for learning, rather than a threat to it.

Engaging Schools

- persuade local organisations to provide authentic locations for learning
- recruit parents and volunteers to be tutors, experts, mentors and coaches
- work in partnership with parents and respect them as the primary educators of their children

4. Parents and Community

Engaging Schools recruit local organisations to provide authentic locations and opportunities for learning

Most schools, including those in the Learning Futures programme, struggle to find real and meaningful opportunities for student learning that goes beyond the school walls. There are, of course, good reasons for this. First, large schools tend to have complicated timetables, which make substantive time learning off site in local organisations a headache to organise. It is no coincidence that schools that have excelled at recruiting local organisations as authentic locations for learning, such as Studio Schools, Big Picture Learning, and Expeditionary Learning, are schools that have adopted much simpler timetables.

However, more importantly, these successful schools started with the principle of learning beyond the classroom, and then built their timetables around it. Most schools fail because they attempt to bolt on learning outside school to the way the rest of the school runs. Throw in the increasing concerns around risk assessment, health and safety, internet firewalls (because learning beyond the classroom happens virtually, as well as physically), and it is little wonder that many schools complain that 'we tried that, but it didn't work'.

Learning beyond the classroom (and school) is a natural partner to project-based learning: taking projects into the community gives them a sense of place, enhancing student (and school) engagement; equally, students working on projects beyond the classroom are required to be like the adults they work alongside (be like an ecologist, be like a photographer, be like a scientist), making the learning more purposeful and pervasive.

However, since each school's location and partnerships differ, it is not possible to be prescriptive about how to structure learning beyond the classroom. Instead, we present a range of opportunities for authentic learning outside of school:

- In **assigning staffing responsibilities** – cultivating meaningful external partnerships cannot be added to a teacher's existing workload. Creating and maintaining (the hard part) such relationships needs to be a discrete administrative function.

- **At the learning design stage** – local community organisations and businesses should be enlisted to co-design extended internships, provide expertise in student projects, set authentic project briefs and contribute to assessment strategies.

- **In supporting learning through ICT** – social learning platforms (blogging, Twitter, video conferencing tools), mobile technologies and virtual learning environments all facilitate more flexible, personalised learning, and help bridge the gap between how young people learn in, and out of, school. Necessary safeguards need to be put in place, but these should protect, not prohibit or inhibit.

- **Presenting learning** – there are few more motivating aspects of students' learning than presenting the outcomes in a public space. Using local venues (cinemas, bookshops, community centres or performance spaces) gives authenticity to the task, and provides the culmination of a partnership. It enables all those engaged in the process (parents, experts, mentors, beneficiaries) to interrogate and honour the learners' contributions and achievement.

The benefits of this hard work pay off. The UK schools inspection agency (Ofsted) has underlined the importance of learning beyond the classroom[25]. Highlighting its impact on students, it cites important cognitive benefits: students not only remember the emotion and excitement of learning beyond the classroom, they remember the knowledge acquired outside the classroom more powerfully. There is a strong correlation between schools that were judged 'improving' or 'outstanding' and their support for learning outside school.

25 Ofsted, *Learning Outside the Classroom: How far should you go?* (2008)

SECTION 3

SECTION 3

Engaging Schools actively involve parents and volunteers as tutors, experts, mentors and coaches

Schools are relatively unique in terms of the reservoir of latent goodwill and expertise that exists within their surrounding communities. This is not just about the talents, skills, expertise, experience and goodwill of parents, but they are a good place to start. Schools' historical stance towards parents has been defensive. Of course, we say that we want their involvement, but communication strategies with them tend to be one-way. Formal means of engaging and interacting either emphasise the unequal relationship (such as parents' evenings) or involve parents at a low level of utility (such as PTA meetings or fundraising events). Looked at through the other end of the telescope, parents and community members care about their local school. Many of them have a considerable amount that they could offer. If only we knew how to capitalise on that.

Schools have long been far too precious about the so-called professional skills of teachers – which, we have argued earlier, should relate to the design of great pedagogy and the integration of curriculum subjects and disciplines. Teachers do not have an exclusive skill-set in terms of forming powerful relationships with young people, tutoring them well, responding to welfare needs, engaging with parents, offering guidance or a host of other functions that support learning inside and outside the classroom.

An Engaging School seeks to offer a truly personalised set of learning experiences, made possible by rethinking the roles of the adults who support learning – teachers, parents, other staff and volunteers. We recognise four valuable roles, tailored according to the needs and preferences of each student's personal learning needs:

- tutor
- expert
- mentor
- coach

In most schools, adult professionals invariably perform these roles, but we believe that parents, members of the local community, and indeed students themselves, all have a vital part to play in extending the range of learning relationships available.

Below are snapshots of some of the strategies which can be adopted – taken from schools in the Learning Futures programme – in order to extend learning relationships:

- Parents assuming the role of learning coaches. Following training, parents can share a language of learning with their children, and can therefore question, challenge, and support the learning process in an informed way.

- Deploying (and often employing) recently-graduated students in subject-specific mentoring roles. We have seen that students are able to be more open and honest with near-to-peer mentors than they would be with their teacher. They are also more motivated by the different social dynamic. Again, there is an investment required – mentors need to be trained – but the improvement in student motivation warrants such investment.

- Using community and business experts in critiquing student enquiries and projects. Their input gives authenticity to the work of students, and helps transform engagement. A precursor to this should be a register of businesses and community organisations and/or a skills audit of parents.

Engaging Schools work in partnership with parents and respect them as the primary educators of their children

Engaging Schools recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children. They are the principle educators during early childhood and the most continuous educator as they grow up. This needs to be stated because, despite early years and primary school educators' acknowledgement of this role, secondary schools have tended often to see parents as a client (at best) or as a part of the problem (at worst). Traditional attempts to involve parents in students' learning at secondary school can be banal: consultations, committees, volunteers at fundraisers.

Project-based learning makes a partnership with parents more possible, with authentic purpose. It provides points of access, it make connections easier, the blending of school, and community learning provides realistic roles for parents – and their contribution to student assessment offers active and meaningful participation.

In summary, we hope that leaders and practitioners will read the above design principles, not as separate elements but as parts of a coherent whole, best seen in relation to each of the others. When a school is able to evolve its culture to one that is open and collaborative, to reimagine how time can be used creatively, use projects as a component of the curriculum and make its boundaries and borders permeable to community learning, so it becomes more natural to engage adults within the learning process.

If the design principles try to set out a vision of an Engaging School, the next section looks at the process of becoming an Engaging School. It describes how school leaders can bring their school community with them on the complex journey of changing the ways students learn and teachers teach and the way the school is organised. This process goes hand in hand with the subsequent section on choosing an implementation model that is right for your school.

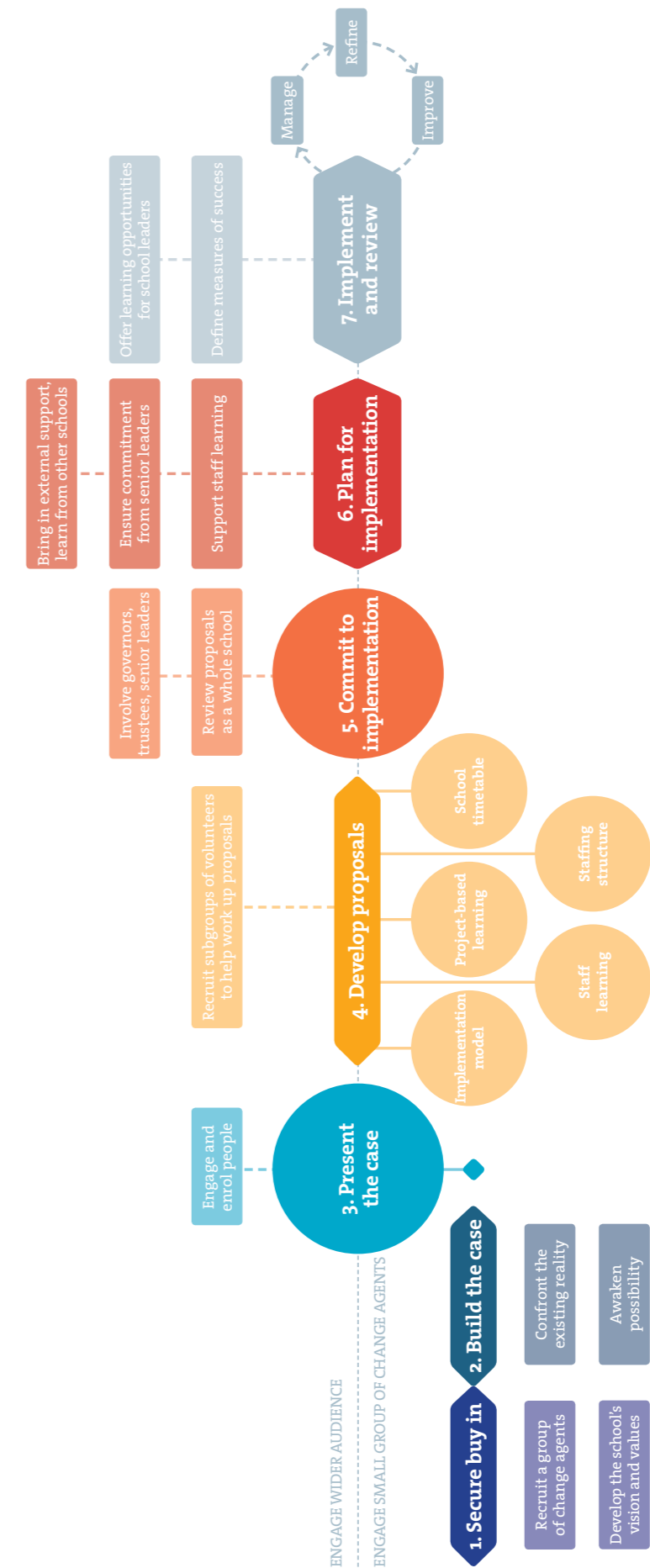# Becoming an Engaging School: from 'what?' to 'how?'

What this section is all about

In this section we outline a seven-step process for becoming an engaging school:

1. Secure buy in from staff, students, governors (or trustees) and families.

2. Build the case by empowering a group of teachers to conduct an enquiry both into innovative educational approaches, and into the community's needs.

3. Present the case to staff, students, governors and families.

4. Develop proposals for implementation.

5. Commit to implementation.

6. Plan for implementation.

7. Implement and review your transformation plan.

Engaging Schools engage students in deep learning by changing the way the curriculum is organised, taught and assessed. To make all this possible, school leaders have to redesign their organisation. Just as the students and staff are immersed in engaging project-based learning, the school leaders' project is the redesign of the whole school, better to serve the learning of the students and the work of the staff.

While the Engaging School design principles indicate what direction to take, they do not tell us how to get there. Below, we describe a seven-phase process for school leaders to use as a road map to become an Engaging School. This process may take a term or it may take a year – depending on the scale of your ambition and the scale of your proposed changes. It is not the only way of becoming an Engaging School, but there is an evidence base that it can be effective. The final section in this handbook points to some resources and tools, and support from Innovation Unit that can be used in each step in the process.

Refine
Manage
Improve

7. Implement and review

Offer learning opportunities for school leaders
Define measures of success

Bring in external support, learn from other schools
Ensure commitment from senior leaders
Support staff learning

6. Plan for implementation

Involve governors, trustees, senior leaders
Review proposals as a whole school

5. Commit to implementation

School timetable
Staffing structure
Recruit subgroups of volunteers to help work up proposals
4. Develop proposals
Project-based learning
Staff learning
Implementation model

Engage and enrol people
3. Present the case

1. Secure buy in
2. Build the case
Confront the existing reality
Awaken possibility
Recruit a group of change agents
Develop the school's vision and values

ENGAGE WIDER AUDIENCE
ENGAGE SMALL GROUP OF CHANGE AGENTS

The 7 steps

1. Secure buy in

The purpose of this first phase is to create the legitimacy and authority for becoming an Engaging School, and to recruit a team of change agents, who are going to develop and implement this change. This entails work with Governors (or Trustees) to agree permissions and secure their full buy in. This will probably include debating and developing the vision and values of your school as an Engaging School, and agreeing the Engaging School design principles to underpin the changes that you are going to make. School leaders know how to make a compelling case for change in their school – helping people confront the reality of where young people's needs are not met, and where there are currently low levels of engagement in learning (including the disengaged achievers). They will also know how best to convince stakeholders that there is another way – and the design principles certainly point to the critical aspects. With buy in and permission to proceed, a school leader will have a mandate to recruit and induct a group of change agents from across the school (and of differing levels of seniority), who will refine the design principles, develop proposals and enact the changes.

2. Build the case

The purpose of this phase is for the group of change agents to develop the case for change for an Engaging School, sufficiently for them to be able to convince and enrol everyone else: the staff, students, parents and community. Running an enquiry group is often the most powerful process for achieving this. There are two dimensions to this enquiry: confronting the existing reality and awakening possibility. For the first part, invite the change agents to investigate and enquire into the problems and challenges of disengagement in the school, into the various data sets that exist, and the perceptions of the school in the broader community. For the second part, research and visit other schools and organisations that have demonstrated excellence in relation to different design principles, and have evidence of overcoming disengagement. This second strand of work will lead the change agents to develop ideas for how to translate the design principles into concrete actions.

3. Present the case

The purpose of the third phase is to convince a wider audience of the case for change, and develop some of the ideas for change in your own school. This can be done at events for staff and governors, parents and the community, and, of course, for students. These events could be mandatory or voluntary, and might include staff training days, student assemblies or tutorials, staff away days, or whole-day student conferences. The events should be designed to convince others of the case for change, secure support for the design principles, recruit and excite others who want to help make the change a success, and develop and refine the ideas and proposals for change in the school. Needless to say, presenting the change agents' findings in an hour-long briefing, or shoehorning them into an already-crowded meeting agenda, will not work. The process is less about the presenting part and more about engaging and enrolling people.

4. Develop proposals

The purpose of this phase is to move from design principles and ideas to practical proposals for implementation in school. If the previous phase was a success, the change-agent group should be able to recruit volunteers to help work up the proposals. This normally requires a small number of subgroups focused on developing proposals on the following issues:

a. implementation model – what is the scale and scope of the Engaging School proposal?

b. project-based learning – proposed changes to how the curriculum is organised and taught

c. school timetable – changes to how the week and school year is organised

d. staffing structure – changes to staff responsibilities, teams, and how they relate to one another

e. staff learning – what support and learning is needed to effect these changes, and how staff learning can be organised to ensure that it leads to high-quality teaching and learning across the school?

5. Commit to implementation

The purpose of this phase is to review the proposals and decide, as a school, which course to take. This is likely to involve governors, trustees and senior leaders, and requires time, debate and careful consideration. Whatever the intended change, there will be a variety of ways into it, or implementation models, as will be described in the next section.

6. Plan for implementation

The purpose of this phase is to ensure successful implementation and minimise the risks of things going wrong. As all school leaders know, once a decision is made, careful planning and preparation is needed before the change is introduced. This cannot be rushed or all the hard work could be wasted. This phase is likely to entail a significant amount of unlearning and relearning for the staff who are going to implement the change. It requires committed leadership at a number of levels, and sustained advocacy and enablement from senior leaders. It may also require external support. Most obviously, it entails designing and planning a new way of organising the curriculum, and a new way of teaching, which will be unfamiliar and challenging. Visiting other schools that have achieved this is important. It is also worth arranging short secondments from staff in those schools to support the change.

7. Implement and review

The final phase in this process is also the first phase of a new process – that of managing, refining, and improving the way the school operates. It is worth mentioning two often neglected elements. Firstly, support for leaders is critical at this stage. No transformation of a school runs completely to plan. School leaders need a wide repertoire of skills and tools to help them deal with what gets thrown at them. Providing proper support to school leaders in the form of coaching, peer support, and opportunities to learn from other schools is essential. Secondly, despite all the hard work and effort, few schools are good at reviewing and evaluating the changes that they make. Support for identifying measures of success, collecting data and reviewing progress is necessary if the sceptics are to be won over, and if the change is to be sustained.

In the Learning Futures programme, one innovative exemplification of this process was led, not by a group of experienced school leaders or governors, but by a group of students. They formed the 'Commission for Learning' – pioneered by Learning Futures Schools in the Harris Federation of Academies in South London.

The Commissioners – a group of students tasked with transforming their school – collectively set out to address the question 'how can we make learning more powerful and engaging in our school?' They had a commitment from senior leaders across all the schools in the Trust to implement the findings from the Commission.

The Commissioners looked externally for expert evidence, innovative models and inspiration. Their enquiry inevitably broadened into where responsibility for learning lies, how staff and students can support each other in delivering and evaluating teaching, and how innovation can be grown and continually supported. They made their case, won the backing of the school communities, and developed concrete proposals that the schools are implementing. The Commissioners at the Harris Schools have created resources to enable students in other schools to carry out their own 'Commission on Learning'[26]. Their work is a model for others.

Becoming an Engaging School takes time and hard work. There are many routes a school can take, depending on where the school is on its own school development journey. The next section is an essential guide to that journey. It asks school leaders to consider the implementation model that best suits their school. Do you want to start with one part of the curriculum, or one year group and grow the approach? Build a school within a school, or transform the learning experiences for all students across the whole curriculum all at once? Although this section is at the end of this handbook, it could easily have been the opening section. It concerns the scale of your endeavour.

26 www.harrisfederation.org.uk/124/about-the-commission

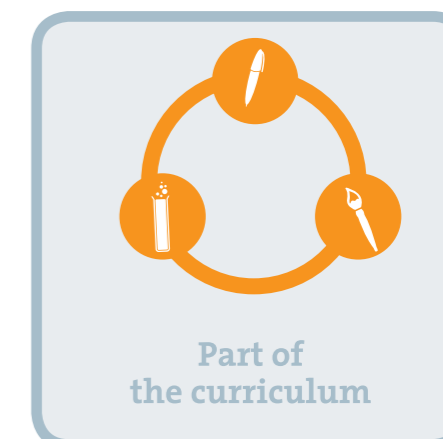# Choosing an implementation model

What this section is all about

There is more than one way to be an Engaging School, and different approaches will be suitable for different schools. In this section, we present five 'implementation models':

1. The school within a school

2. Part of the curriculum

3. One day per week

4. Week long 'intensives'

5. The whole school

It is time to start considering which implementation model is best for your school. We recommend that you try to avoid deciding on a model in advance of engaging with staff, students and parents.

There are two reasons for this: first, you may be surprised by what they come up with; second, you are more likely to enjoy widespread support if colleagues, students and families feel like they were involved in the decision-making process from the beginning. We set out below five implementation models, explaining what each one entails and giving some advice on making it work:

The school
within a school

Part of
the curriculum

One day
per week

Week-long
'intensives'

The whole school

The school within a school

1. The school within a school

Essentially, this entails the creation within a school of a separate, self-contained school community that has a unique ethos, organisation, and follows a distinct curriculum. The school within a school (the mini-school) can be formed as a big bang (e.g. with Years 7, 8 and 9 starting together), or it can be allowed to emerge gradually with a year group at a time.

For the students in the mini-school, their primary learning identity will be linked to that mini-school – following the curriculum particular to that school, having advisories or tutoring within that school, but also being able to access the main school facilities (library, resources, dining rooms etc.) and opportunities (the cultural programme, residentials, sports teams etc.). The mini-school will have its own headteacher and staff who may do some teaching across the wider school, but whose primary responsibilities and accountabilities will be in the school within a school.

There are a number of significant advantages to this model:

- The innovation is insulated from the rest of the work of the main school.

- Staff can be recruited to the mini-school on the basis of their passion for the work.

- Students can also choose the school – because of their desire to learn in a different way.

- Similarly, parents can choose to support the mini-school – both through supporting their child's choice and actively through involvement.

- It is feasible to have a radically different timetable structure in a mini-school – one of the real problems for a school seeking to integrate the Engaging School principles into mainstream schooling.

- The mini-school model allows a significant focus on relationships as a foundation for effective learning.

- The approach both manages risk and creates an experimental design through which it is feasible to evaluate success.

Two examples (opposite) will help to illustrate how this can work.

EXAMPLE: Studio Schools

Studio Schools[27] have a very distinct curriculum offer. Designed for 14 to 19 year olds of all abilities, the Studio Schools model includes a personalised curriculum, real-world orientation and practical learning, genuine (paid) work opportunities and assessment of skills, as well as other qualifications. There is also a commitment that this experience will take place in a small-school community, within which each student will be well known and will have a personal coach. So, a school choosing to become a Studio School is expected to create that school as a separate entity and identity within the body of the main school – separated physically, with a purpose-designed learning environment, different learner expectations and its own ethos.

It is early days for Studio Schools, but the model of implementation has an internal logic, a rigour and a fitness for purpose that is persuasive. Schools can create their own small school within a school.

A second example is taken from the Human Scale Education Movement[28]. Essentially, there is no other way that makes much sense when implementing human-scale principles into mainstream schooling than to break up the large comprehensive school into a number of small schools. Just as with an Engaging School, the prototype may be one school within the larger community, but ultimately that is a forerunner of a new schooling model.
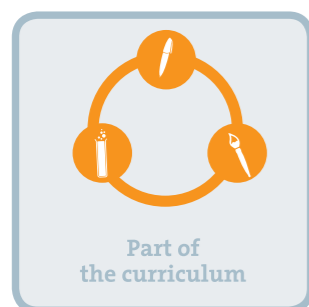
EXAMPLE: Stanley Park High School

Stanley Park High School in Sutton has done just this – has in fact created 'Schools within Schools'. In effect, 70 Year 7 and 8 students go into each of three mini schools, called Performance (arts and PE based), Trade (applied technologies based) and World (humanities based). To make this move, and to design an interdisciplinary curriculum focused on core skills (the Excellent Futures Curriculum), with a new model of assessment, a multi-disciplinary group of staff was provided with time and resource support – and the support of students as co-designers. This investment in staff development and design time (including structured study visits to schools in Denmark and New York) was supported by an equivalent investment in the redesign of learning spaces – realising that creating an innovative approach and shoving it into traditional classrooms with traditional furniture would not work.

Unlike Studio Schools, the move to small schools at Stanley Park High School has had time to mature and to yield evidence. Attendance and punctuality have improved; exclusions of all kinds have drastically fallen; approval ratings from parents are very high; applications to the school have increased by 150 per cent. Beyond this, achievement and attainment data show a rapid and consistent improvement.

27 For more detail about Studio Schools go to www.studioschoolstrust.org
28 For more detail about the Human Scale Education Movement go to www.hse.org.uk

SECTION 5

Part of
the curriculum

2. Part of the curriculum

This model essentially involves changes to a significant part of the school's curriculum component (usually by combining subjects). At its most conservative, this could be within one faculty, such as humanities, creative arts or science, but it is much more likely to be a new combination of subjects to create the interdisciplinary possibilities and the contrast of disciplines.

Examples of how this has worked in two of the schools in the Learning Futures programme will illustrate the range of ways that this can be done (see opposite page).

Language Futures also transforms the role of the teacher from language expert to facilitator in language learning, with 'learning to learn' becoming one of the wider goals of the project. Using still-emerging technologies and digital media, students explore relevant resources available to them, thus promoting independent, self-motivated and self-access learning, as well as peer tutoring and wider social networking.

Language Futures is already having an influence on more conventional language pedagogies at the school, and aspects of the approach are also influencing other departments as confidence grows in the methodologies.

EXAMPLE: Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire

At Linton Village College in Cambridgeshire, the Learning Futures design focused on Modern Languages in Years 7 and 8. The programme is called Language Futures, and it is an innovative, mixed-ability project offering pupils the chance to study a language of their choice as their second chosen language. In effect, rather than being a class taught a common language, the group becomes a community of language learners, facilitated by staff, which contains clusters of students learning (and peer supporting) Spanish, Italian, Mandarin, German – or whatever languages are chosen. Students usually have a personal investment in their chosen language because of family connections or cultural links. They are encouraged to immerse themselves, both at home and in school, into the whole language culture, thus resolving the restraints of a traditional curriculum.

Linton seeks out and trains a team of bilingual community mentors, who take opportunities to work alongside students in school, and to sustain connection beyond school – both in support of language acquisition and use, and as an adult learning mentor.

EXAMPLE: Matthew Moss High School, Rochdale

At Matthew Moss High School in Rochdale, eight lessons per week (two each from English, Humanities, Science and Technology) in Years 7, 8 and 9 are merged to form My World, within which learners pursue knowledge, skills and understanding through enquiry-based and project-based learning. These eight lessons each week effectively form four half-days of active learning, utilising a range of spaces within the school and locations beyond. The programme is accompanied by extensive involvement of community partners. The My World curriculum utilises about a third of the staff in the school each year, but this is a growing proportion of the total staff as new members get to participate each year.

One day
per week

3. One day per week

There are many examples of this approach being utilised by relatively innovative UK schools. Whether we are talking about 'Project Friday' or some other day of the week, the idea is to have one day when the entire school engages in whole-day learning experiences that are more practical, applied and pedagogically varied. Many schools design interdisciplinary projects to take place on at least a proportion of these days.

The advantages of this implementation model are:

- It is minimally disruptive – the other four days being conventional teaching.

- It provides a year-long curriculum, which can be led by a core team of enthusiastic staff.

- It offers an ideal way for teachers to explore and experiment with interdisciplinary co-design work – different groups planning different days or units for different years, supported by the core team.

- It also offers a manageable unit for engaging students in co-design activities.

- It impacts on the whole staff – so that the core team can act as coaches and professional developers across an entire year to embed skills and beliefs.

- Broken up as it is, it offers multiple opportunities for review and refinement.

- It is relatively easy to involve community partners in whole-day activities.

- It embraces all staff – takes the whole school forward together.

- It can very easily be grown by increasing the number of days.

However, it also has disadvantages, and they should be noted too, because the model is beguilingly promising, and the downsides are significant. The most important one is that episodic one-day events do not really provide a fully authentic project-based learning experience. Project-based learning involves handing learning over to students, inviting them to engage in depth and in a sustained way, and to create exhibition outcomes that have been refined multiple times. Of course, it is possible to run a project across multiple weeks on one day a week, with student self-directed learning taking place in-between times, but that is far from ideal. The reality is that many students will struggle to sustain the engagement with that approach, which, in turn, will allow sceptics to criticise the approach.

SECTION 5

SECTION 5

Week-long 'intensives'

4. Week-long 'intensives'

Although customarily called 'block weeks' we prefer the term 'intensives' (taken from the US) because it suggests exactly what this is – an intensive learning experience, a series of intensive delivery points or experiences in a curriculum.

EXAMPLE: NYC iSchool

At NYC iSchool, challenge-based learning occurs through courses called Modules, which are intensive, nine-week interdisciplinary courses developed around real-world challenges. Modules are designed to develop students' understanding of big ideas and broad global concepts, and their development and application of 21st century skills – the kind of things the leaders hope students will remember and still need to know and use 20 years from now.

Modules are developed with real work and real-world challenges in mind; whenever possible, this work actually derives from the needs of real clients, who might come to the iSchool with a real challenge or task for students to complete. Solving this challenge, or completing this job, then becomes the driving force and curriculum of the module. Each day in class, students then work towards completion of the job.

Both the content and skills students learn each day contribute to their understanding of the task or challenge, provide content-related context, and enable them to complete the challenge well, at a high level of quality, as professionals would.

Through Modules, students have the opportunity to work alongside experts to do real work for an audience outside the school that will make a difference to an organisation or community, and that teaches them important skills and understandings in a more meaningful way[29].

Characteristically, week-long intensives based on Engaging School design principles might happen two or three times a year. They can be whole-school events, although often it is for selected year groups (and often schools pick year groups that are not due to sit public examinations).

At its worst, this approach is seen as an alternative to the school curriculum, or as time out from the curriculum, described as 'time off timetable'. At its best, it is a planned and integrated part of the school's curriculum and pedagogic design. This blocks-of-time option is not a prototype. It is about designing in something with all the students and all the staff, (but only applying the model for some of the time in the school year).

As such, it can be a key strategy in a whole-school change journey; a means of gaining a relatively low-risk foothold for alternative practices, of demonstrating success and creating evidence that it works. Its virtue is that it occurs in a 'some of the time', bounded way that staff and parents (and students) can accommodate.

Bearing in mind one strong reservation about intensives, namely that they can be perceived by a proportion of staff as something occurring at the margins, to be endured until the predictable normality of everyday school returns, there are definitely a number of significant advantages:

- Its inherent design removes the straightjacket of the timetable, and makes whole days or groups of days available, which lends itself well to project-based learning designs.

- Just as staff will be teaching for whole days, some will also be free for whole days, so it is easy to design into these weeks professional development opportunities (such as school visits) or collaborative planning time. It invites interdisciplinary planning and design – on significant curriculum components.

- It opens up the curriculum to other opportunities – student co-design and feedback, parent and community involvement etc. It readily allows mixed-age learning, because all year groups are following a similar schedule.

- It is a convenient curriculum unit for the involvement of experts – artists, craftspeople, scientists, photographers, sportsmen and women etc. – who can never accommodate involvement in one-hour lessons, but who can give a whole day or units of days. It readily lends itself to community-based learning of a variety of types.

There is also one further advantage that shouldn't be underestimated. Teaching in whole days and week-long intensives requires collective unlearning and relearning, and that is a great context to create a shared learning culture, plan together, to observe one another, to review success and failure, to invite students to contribute and to give feedback, because at least in the early stages no-one's core professional identity, their classroom craft identity, is threatened by this alternative mode of teaching and learning.

29 www.nycischool.org/home

5. The whole school

Needless to say, the whole school model is the most challenging. Unless you have introduced, refined and developed some or all of the other models over a number of years, we do not advise introducing a whole-school approach overnight. However, there is one exception to this, and that is those school leaders who have the opportunity, to design and create a new school from scratch. This offers a unique opportunity to rethink every aspect of teaching and learning, beginning with your vision for an Engaging School.

The headteacher of a new school can design the school's 'software' – such as the timetable, the staffing structure, and the opportunities for professional development. In some instances, the new headteacher also has a say over the 'hardware' – the design of the building itself, and the physical resources that will be available to students and staff.

The headteacher can also recruit staff who share the school's vision, and the new staff can develop the skills they will need together. Finally, there is an opportunity to engage with families, community groups and local employers **before** the school opens, to find out how the school can best serve their needs. In gauging – and in influencing – the communities' views about what is needed, the headteacher can calibrate the degree to which they can be radical from the outset.

If you are a headteacher designing a new school, or a school leader wanting to change the learning experiences for all the students, in a whole year group, or a head of department wanting to transform the way their subject is taught, the next section points to a range of different resources designed to help.

SECTION 6

Where next?

What this section is all about

This section tells you how to get involved in the Engaging Schools community, and gives details of support on offer, and catalogues the free resources and tools that you and your staff can use.

This handbook has been all about what it means to be an Engaging School, and how to go about becoming one. It has addressed why schools need to be more engaging, the key organisational conditions that need to change in schools, what the journey to becoming an Engaging School might look like, and how you might embed these practices within your school.

The only thing left to say is that, if you are thinking about putting this into practice and becoming an Engaging School, you need not do so in isolation. Innovation Unit is working with school leaders, teachers, and sponsors of new schools, to help them make their schools more engaging.

We're looking for people who are interested in joining us on this venture. This might involve trying out our tools and methods and giving us advice for future iterations, sharing your own experiences of teaching and learning with practitioners from around the world, and taking steps on the road towards making your own school more engaging.

The easiest way to learn more about becoming an Engaging School is to email us at contact@innovationunit.org, or sign up to join the Community of Interest and receive our newsletter here www.innovationunit.org/newsletter (don't forget to tick the box labelled 'Engaging Schools').

What is on offer?

In order to support schools in becoming more engaging, we are offering the following:

- free guides and tools (see next page for more about these)
- free 'webinars', in which teachers and school leaders around the world share ideas, problems, and practices
- events for school leaders who are interested in Engaging Schools
- bespoke support for school leaders, Academy Trusts, local authorities and sponsors of new schools.

Free tools and resources

These are all available for download from our website
www.learningfutures.org

Learning Futures: Vision for Engaging Schools

This pamphlet explains what we mean by engagement and why engagement is so important, and describes the diverse ways that the schools in the Learning Futures programme became more engaging places to learn.

Work that matters: The teacher's guide to project-based learning

Written in partnership with San Diego's High Tech High, this guide offers step-by-step advice on planning and managing extended, interdisciplinary projects, as well as useful protocols for critique sessions, templates for important documents such as project plans, and examples of high-impact projects.

Spaced Learning: Making memories stick

Developed by Learning Futures' school, Monkseaton High School, Spaced Learning is a method of embedding knowledge in long-term memory very quickly – quickly enough to cover and retain a whole subject module in approximately an hour. We have supported Spaced Learning's development because teachers can use it to cover required content very quickly, enabling them to devote more time to project-based learning. **Spaced learning is highly content-rich, so we recommend using it no more than once or twice in a term.**

The Engaging School Survey

This is designed to ascertain levels of students' engagement, as, in order to raise student engagement, schools need to understand the ways in which their students are engaged (and disengaged). It provides a set of independently validated questions for students to answer, with information about how to interpret the results. The Engaging School Survey will be available from our partners Whole Education
www.wholeeducation.org

Case Studies of Engaging Schools

Our case studies describe places that exemplify characteristics of engaging schools. One case study (Yewlands) describes a school in an area of high deprivation that has turned itself around dramatically. The other case study (PLACE) is about a programme where students and families learn without school, organising their own learning groups and commissioning experts (including teachers) to teach them what they are interested in learning. They provide detailed analysis of the organisational conditions and leadership techniques that have made their success possible.

Learning Futures videos

They offer insights from school leaders into the following: the process of leading transformational change in school, the origins of a vision for innovation, leadership of people, managing risk, resources for innovation, and shifting operational conditions and structures.

To access our free materials, visit www.learningfutures.org, or email us at contact@innovationunit.org

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Commissioned photography by Emile Holba (www.emileholba.co.uk)

Innovation Unit

We are the innovation unit for public services. As a not-for-profit social enterprise, we're committed to using the power of innovation to solve social challenges. We have a strong track record of supporting leaders and organisations delivering public services to see and do things differently. They come to us with a problem, and we empower them to achieve radically different solutions that offer better outcomes for lower costs.

In education, we work at a local, national, and international level, in projects ranging from work with individual school leaders who want to make their schools more engaging places to learn, to work with system leaders in New York City, British Columbia, Finland, South Korea, and Brazil who are transforming their entire education systems. If you are a school leader, or a system leader working across many schools, we are interested in talking to you.

Website: www.innovationunit.org
Twitter: @innovation_unit

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Paul Hamlyn Foundation is an independent grant-making organisation. Founded by the publisher and philanthropist Paul Hamlyn (1926-2001), it operates three UK programmes – in the Arts, Education and Learning, and Social Justice – and a programme of support for NGOs in India.

The Foundation's mission is to help people to fulfil their potential and enjoy a better quality of life. The Education and Learning programme provides funds through an Open Grants scheme, open to eligible organisations at any time. The programme also develops and funds Special Initiatives – strategic, targeted interventions in specific areas of need – such as Learning Futures.

Website: www.phf.org.uk
Twitter: @phf_uk

"If you can crack the problem of engagement – not just 'are you paying attention?', but 'are you fascinated by this?' – if you can crack engagement in deep learning then you've cracked 21st century schooling."

MIKE BERRILL
EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL, BIDDENHAM INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

What does it mean to be an Engaging School and how do you go about becoming one? This handbook for school leaders addresses why we need Engaging Schools, the key organisational conditions that need to change in schools, what the journey to becoming an Engaging School might look like, and how you might embed these practices within your school.

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phf Paul Hamlyn Foundation

LEARNING FUTURES