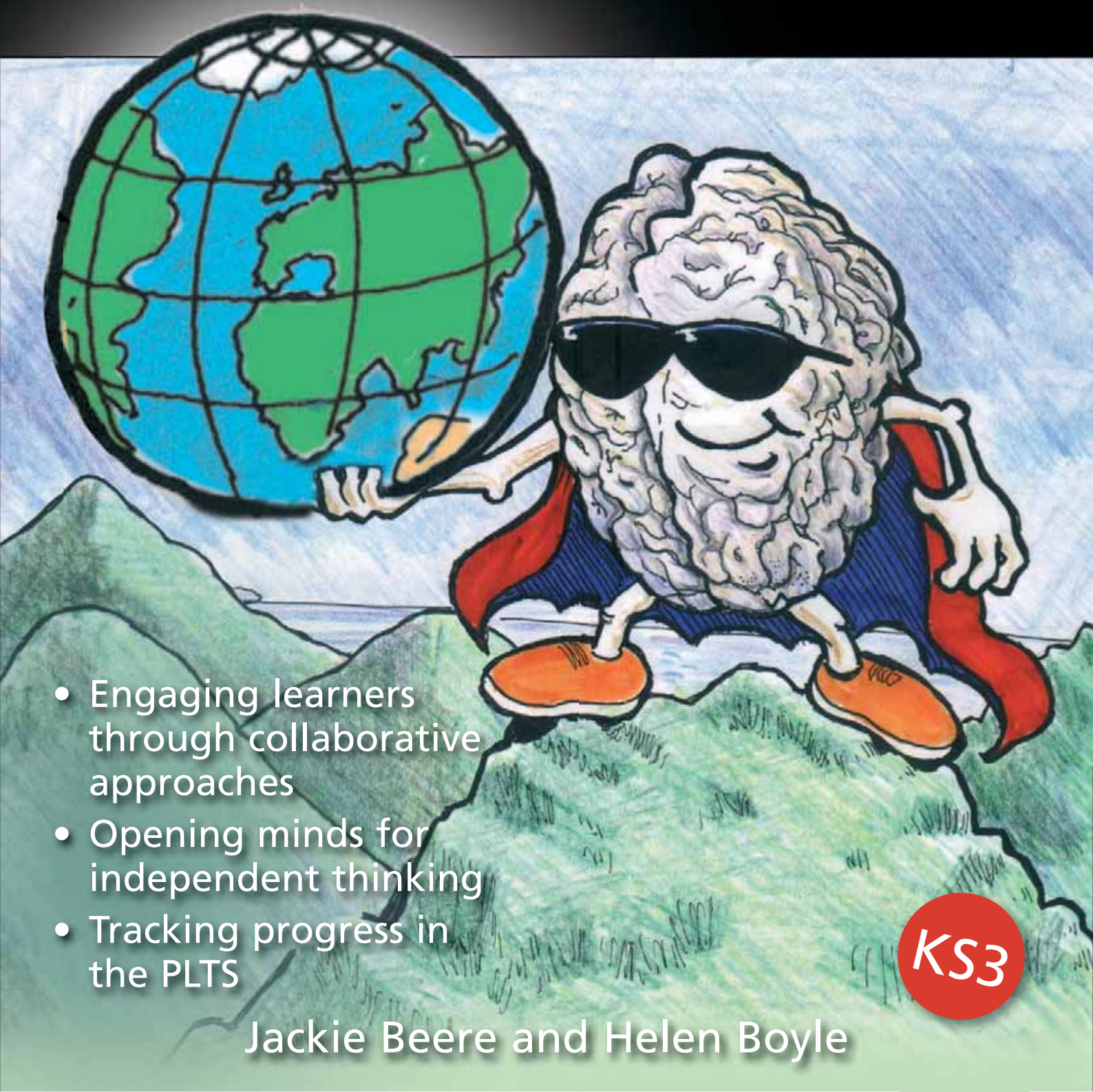
The Competency Curriculum Toolkit

Developing PLTS Through Themed Learning



- Engaging learners through collaborative approaches
- Opening minds for independent thinking
- Tracking progress in the PLTS

KS3

Jackie Beere and Helen Boyle

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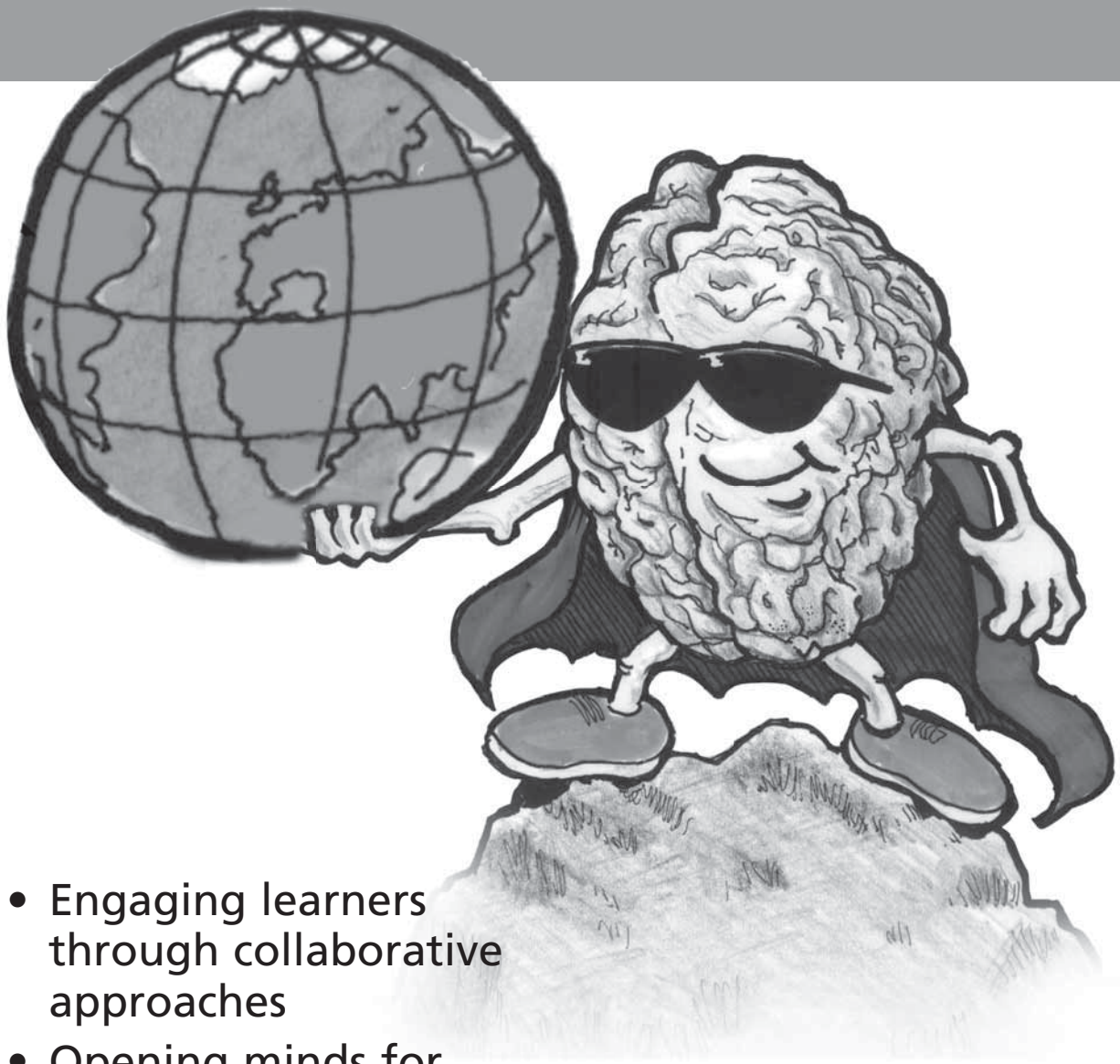

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Introduction

This book has been written in response to many requests from teachers and curriculum leaders for something 'to help us on the way to creating our competency-based curriculum'. It is not a programme, a manual or a 'how to do' book. It is a resource in four sections. Section 1 is a review of the theory that led us to consider re-designing our UK curriculum. Section 2 is packed full of resources: work schemes for some exemplar projects and associated lessons which show how they may be delivered. Section 3 contains some more loosely structured 'breakthrough' projects for Year 8 or alternative blocked day approaches. There is an electronic Tracker Pack to accompany Section 4 that offers some ideas on how both the student and the teacher can track progress in the competences as they develop. The case studies given throughout the book demonstrate how powerful this learning can be in real schools. You will find some of this toolkit useful for training and some useful for delivering your new curriculum but, above all, it is meant to be adapted to become bespoke for your own school and context.

We have a fantastic opportunity to change the experience of students in Key Stage 3, so that instead of plateauing through KS3, they take off as engaged learners into KS4. It is our experience that this more active, collaborative curriculum delivers a new range of skills which encourage learners to become independent and self-managing. We had two overriding priorities for the competency curriculum approach proposed in this book:

- That it must nurture an independent and emotionally intelligent young person who takes more responsibility for his or her own learning.
- That it must be rigorous, challenging and able to demonstrate progress in the personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) and in subject-specific skills.

It has been written to try to provide inspiration, motivation, examples and ideas to help teachers find a path through the difficult task of planning, writing and resourcing a competency curriculum. In writing this book, we have realised what a complex process it is to develop your own new curriculum, evaluate it and evolve it to suit your students. This book aims to give you ideas that will help you take the first steps in a process that will take several years; building a competency curriculum is not a quick fix, but the start of a long, exciting journey.

How to use this toolkit

Prepare

The first two chapters provide essential background information about the context of the major changes in the curriculum brought about by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in 2008. These chapters put the needs of learners in a global context and there are PowerPoint presentations on the CD-ROM to help you deliver the messages about twenty-first century learning to the staff at your school.

Decisions

The personal, learning and thinking skills are the competences we have chosen to use in this toolkit.

The PLTS
Team workers
Self-managers
Independent enquirers
Effective participators
Reflective learners
Creative thinkers

The PLTS have evolved from the early work on the Opening Minds curriculum by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA). They are now recommended by QCA and will be integrated into the Diplomas at KS4. It makes sense to use these as competences because they seem to contain all the skills a student will need for learning in the twenty-first century. However, you may wish to add literacy or other competences of your own choosing. Alternatively, you could group the competences together for easier assessment as we have done later in the Tracker Pack (Section 4). The English Speaking and Listening Assessment of Pupil Progress (APP) progression model could also be used to help assessment in the classroom and as a powerful addition to your tracking audit. The students spend most of their time communicating with each other in this type of curriculum so it makes sense for them to measure their progress in this essential skill.

Chapter 3 outlines the options for delivering a competency curriculum. There are many possible methods of delivery. However, we have provided resources for our favourite model, which is for a KS3 programme that delivers a high percentage of competency teaching in Year 7. This then moves to a student-designed project model in Year 8, alongside more subject specialism and then into further subject specialism in Year 9.

In addition, it is recommended that the ultimate outcome of the two to three year programme is an accredited, independent 'project' at Level 1 or 2 (AQA or Edexcel). In this the students will create their own learning assignment which will be their first experience of exam success. Through this model the purpose of KS3 will be to help nurture independent learners who have great learning 'habits' and an excellent understanding of what the PLTS are and how to develop them in their KS4 courses.

Competency projects: Setting PLTS lesson objectives and delivering essential subject skills		
Year 7 – Up to 50% of curriculum will be competence/ project based led.	Year 8 – up to 30% of curriculum will be competence/ project based led with a greater emphasis placed on students to design their own projects.	Year 9 – up to 10% of curriculum to be competence/ project based led, leading to a project delivering 0.5 GCSE.

Implement

The toolkit in Section 2 offers sample schemes of work, ready-to-use lesson plans and teacher's notes for four projects which aim to deliver half a term's work each (depending upon how much timetable time you give to the projects). These projects provide examples which can be used off-the-shelf but it is recommended that they are adapted to your context and your students.

In particular there are the following recommendations:

Localise

Create an additional project that fits your locality and engages students with their community. You can do this using the blank pro-forma found on the CD-ROM.

Learn to learn first

Brain Breakthrough (Project 1) contains many lessons from *The Learner's Toolkit* by Jackie Beere (2007). It is included here as the first project because it is important to train students early in the basic neuroscience they need in order to believe that they can be great learners. It will also

introduce them to the notion of learning styles and preferences in order for them to take more responsibility for their own learning. An important aspect of this is for the students to realise that their brain will grow and change as they learn. Learning to Learn is about flexibility, responsibility and reflection, which are all useful skills to apply to the rest of this programme of study. This part of the course and indeed the whole competency approach will also deliver and develop the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL).

Subjects to be included

You will need to decide which subjects you want to include in your competency curriculum. You will notice that curriculum links are included for all the projects outlined in this book. It is advised that similar links are included in order to reassure staff that subject-specific skills and content are delivered in the projects studied, as well as the PLTS competences. The team planning the projects should involve the appropriate specialist teachers from the subjects included.

Progression – more co-designed projects

In Section 3 we introduce Breakthrough Projects. These are exciting, loosely structured projects that allow more freedom of choice in the activities for students. It is our experience that students really engage with this type of learning and that it can deliver the PLTS effectively. These projects can be used to progress towards even more student centred activities. They can also be used as one-off PLTS days or PSHE/Citizenship lessons. They include suggested activities based on the multiple intelligence model but also have the option for students to create their own activities. It is recommended that students work out success criteria for all of the tasks which they design in order to ensure high quality outcomes. The assessment of the PLTS during these activities by students and teachers will help students develop a more independent approach to prepare them for planning their own project for accreditation later.

Praise and advice

Assessment for learning techniques involves self- and peer-assessment and this is an essential aspect of the learning that takes place in a competency curriculum. The praise and advice model seen in some of the projects is a simple device to help students support each others' learning on a regular basis throughout their project and at the end of it.

Assessment – towards 'golden learning'

The Tracker Pack and CD-ROM assessment tool is a suggested means to help assess competency-based learning. It is suggested that a paper copy of the Tracker Pack is kept by students for regular assessment sessions. The electronic version can then be used to summarise this paper copy and can be supplemented by the teacher's grading which can be reported to parents. However, its main purpose is to track progress against specific criteria and share with students how progress is being made in the competences and how targets should be set. The notion of 'golden learning' is a method we have used that has been popular but many schools use the terms *developing, progressing, mastery* or other preferred descriptors of levels. As mentioned earlier, the APP progression models can be used if additional tracking in core or foundation subjects is required.

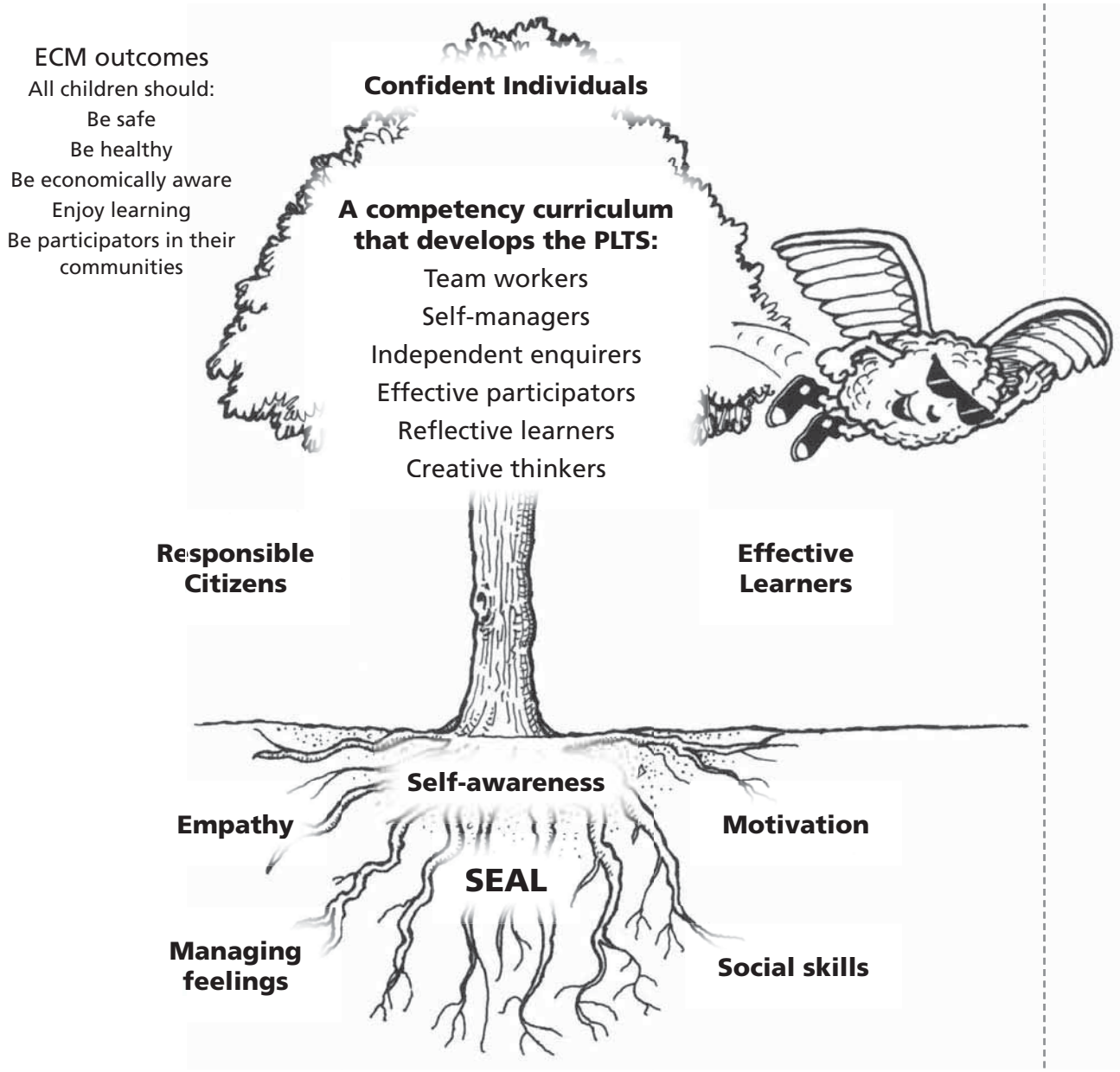
Please note: Recording National Curriculum (NC) levels for subjects other than core may not be practical or possible when implementing a competency approach, so qualitative reporting and self-assessment is recommended. In addition, QCA will be bringing out a progression model for the PLTS in 2009. This may eventually be the chosen tool for assessing progress into the future.

TOP TIP The ideal experience for students would be to have the same teacher, in the same classroom, with easy access to laptops.

This aspiration for implementation of the work described in this book could determine the success or failure of your new curriculum.

The twenty-first century learning school

This diagram shows how the elements of SEAL provide the roots of emotional intelligence that could be at the heart of the school vision. The trunk of the tree represents the curriculum that can deliver the Personal, Learning and Thinking skills (PLTS) across the whole curriculum. The leaves and blossom are the aims of the curriculum which is reflected in the delivery of the Every Child Matters outcomes for young people.



We would like to wish you the very best of luck implementing your new curriculum and using these resources. No doubt by the time this book is published there will be further evidence to support the need for a competency curriculum in secondary schools that will develop learners who will love learning and thrive in the global economy.

If you have any doubts about whether or not to make this happen, consider this question: What do you remember learning during your secondary school education in KS3?

Jackie Beere
Helen Boyle

Chapter 1

Essential Learning for the Twenty-first Century

Why we need a competency-based curriculum

Do we produce the above now in our schools? If not, how can we?

Key questions:

- Should the curriculum be organised around subjects or skills?
- How can we teach students emotional intelligence and self-management skills?
- Who should be teaching them—teachers, other adults, other students, online tutors?
- How can we ensure that students transfer their skills and knowledge from one subject area to another encouraging independent, flexible learning capacity?
- How can we ensure that we are developing creative thinkers and risk takers?
- How can we make sure that even disruptive students 'choose to learn'?

There is a growing global desire to find out just what we need to change in our education systems that will make the difference; the difference between producing pupils who simply pass (or fail) exams and producing independent lifelong learners who can thrive in the new fast moving, knowledge-based economy.

Our contention is that we need to fundamentally change our methods of learning and teaching, especially for KS3. There are many theories of learning, such as Howard Gardner's ideas regarding multiple intelligence; David Kolb's cycle of experiential learning which requires a shift 'towards teaching *how* to do something'; Daniel Goleman's seminal work on the impact of emotional intelligence on learning; and Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam's research on the impact of assessment for learning as an alternative to summative assessment. All have profound implications for the development of learning in our schools.

This has been identified in *2020 Vision: Report of the Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review Group* (2007), reporting on the requirements for personalising learning for Ofsted, which recommends that 'all children and young people leave school with functional skills in English and Maths, understanding how to learn, think creatively, take risks and handle change'.

What changes do we need to see in our schools?

A crucial requirement is to have a greater focus on *how* we learn and a determined drive to develop an educational system that helps children learn more effective life skills rather than learning 'stuff'.

This paradigm shift in emphasis should include developing in students a deep understanding of their own learning profiles and how to use these to raise achievement and develop their full potential. Teachers, students and parents all need to understand their learning styles and how to engage the brain and manage their minds for learning. Students could then use this knowledge to develop transferable skills, especially in literacy, numeracy, communication and self-management, in order to become the emotionally intelligent, flexible learners needed for the twenty-first century.

In addition, schools have to develop students' skills in teamwork and cooperation that are so evident in the activities children take part in outside of school, such as sports and productions. Extra-curricular activities have often been 'tacked on' to an overcrowded, content-dominated curriculum rather than being placed at the centre of a competency-based curriculum that focuses on skills acquired rather than information remembered.

Our students have to become more aware of their place in the world and become competent in building rapport with other cultures. It is likely they will work for international companies and communicate in a virtual environment where geography is no longer a barrier to communication. As the youngsters of the emerging nations, such as China and India, embrace the electronic era with a creativity and determination borne of cultural economic disadvantage, we must ensure that our future generations can compete.

From one teacher at age 10 to fourteen teachers at age 11?

The present models of a compartmentalised curriculum based on subject content, the teacher as an expert and the student as a passive recipient, have not produced the skills and competences our young people need to become successful learners. Almost fifty per cent are still deemed to 'fail' by not achieving the standard five A*–C GCSE target and more importantly employers worry that students move into work without the self-management skills they need for the workplace. A holistic approach to education that focuses on competences rather than curriculum, and emotional intelligence rather than notions of fixed IQ seems to be the essential learning paradigm for the next generation.

In England the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Opening Minds curriculum for the encouragement of art, manufacturing and commerce is one such alternative model being adopted in schools with very promising outcomes, including

What is a competency-based curriculum?

A competency-based curriculum is where the delivery focuses on outcomes related to competences rather than content. The traditional subject-based delivery is replaced in these lessons by a cross-curricular approach which links together many different specialisms to enhance learning. Content is delivered via a pedagogy that encourages active, independent learning through groupwork and student-centred learning in which the teacher acts most often as a facilitator. This is in contrast to a didactic, teacher-led approach where the teacher dominates the discourse and asks the questions. The idea of a less didactic model of learning is not a new concept, as Jean Piaget observed in 1945: 'The principal goal of education is to create men [*sic*] who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done—men who are creative, inventive and discoverers.'

The competency curriculum has been proposed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) in response to a need to develop skills for employability known now as the personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) in which students are encouraged to become:

- Team workers
- Self-managers
- Independent enquirers
- Effective participators
- Reflective learners
- Creative thinkers

These skills can be taught through subjects but a competency approach at KS3 links subjects together and delivers the learning through themes or projects. These are completed by students under the supervision of teachers whose lesson objectives aim to develop and assess the competences rather than merely test the acquisition of a bank of knowledge. Many schools have delivered Learning to Learn as a first project, taught in the first half term for about six hours a week, and in this way hope to develop an ownership and responsibility for learning in the hearts and minds of their students. Again, this is not a new concept. As Benjamin Bloom said in 1956: 'The purpose of education is to change the thoughts and feelings and actions of students.'

A competency curriculum thus first and foremost delivers competences and skills, usually within a project, delivered by a teacher who facilitates active learning experiences and who measures the successful acquisition of the competences. Much of this type of pedagogy is simply best practice for engaging learners and has often been observed in different subjects and on cross-curricular days. However, rearranging the delivery of subjects into cross-curricular projects offers an opportunity to take more radical steps towards engaging learners in active, independent learning.

Opening Minds is the name of the Royal Society of Art's competency curriculum and has its own set of competences that are delivered through a themed or project-based approach.

Real learning in an Opening Minds classroom

Imagine a classroom where all students are focused and buzzing with the excitement of learning. Some are sitting at laptops putting finishing touches to their PowerPoint presentation on Global Issues and sharing thoughts with their teacher about which animation looks most effective. Others are standing, practising a presentation with a large display of leaves and mosses stuck onto a massive poster. One or two are sitting flicking through their folders drawing together an evaluation of their competences, admiring the work they've done in this project and peer-assessing each others' work. A pair of students are discussing the research material they found on an internet search. A small group are sitting on the floor in the corner experimenting with a board game created to promote environmental awareness. One student is fixed in intense concentration creating a model from unbent paper clips and tape to

use as a mini recycle centre. The noise is busy and lively and self-directed. For a moment I can't see where the teacher is. Then I realise the bell went five minutes ago—but nobody has moved …

Where are we now?

'School is boring' is the most common criticism that comes from students whose achievement starts plateauing at Year 8. When students join secondary education they are keen to learn and spend lots of time straining to get attention and have a go with their hands in the air. There are lots of accompanying 'Oohhhs' as they try to be the person to attempt to answer the questions and get the praise.

In too many cases, that infectious enthusiasm turns into noisy disruption within a year. After two more years, students can become passive, dependent and even resistant to any independent learning, waiting instead for their teachers to tow them through Key Stage 4. But these same students can shine again when placed in a skateboarding park, in front of a computer game, under a car bonnet or when given ingredients to make cosmetics to prepare a friend's face for a party night.

To be motivated, students have to see the point of what they learn and the connections it has to other learning and to their lives. No matter how worthy we feel the content of the National Curriculum is, many of our students don't seem to agree. We need to make learning interesting, fun, connected with the students' lives and with their emotional brains.

'Dull lessons with too much teacher talk' is cited by student voice research at a Local Authority as a reason for persistent absence.

'I'll do it when I feel like it'

So, what makes us feel like learning or working? Leading researchers say that understanding learners' emotions is one of the keys to motivation. Emotions influence not only motivation but also selective attention, event interpretation, prediction, recall, decision making, problem solving and, of course, learning: 'By learning to manage our own emotions, we can stay better motivated to be at our best' (Jensen 1995).

Dr Paul Maclean (1978) suggested the notion of the three part or triune brain:

- *The reptilian brain* – responsible for basic responses to the environment such as territorial and ritualistic behaviours and behaviours which help us to survive by being ready to fight, fly, flock or freeze if threatened.
- *The emotional brain* – often called the limbic system which helps us lay down long-term memories. We need to switch this on if learning is to be memorable.
- *The thinking brain* – found in the neocortex (the folded outer layers of the brain) which is responsible for thought, reasoning and other higher order thinking skills.

The problem in a conventional classroom is that students may feel threatened, even if only by the embarrassment of getting it wrong, and so can downshift into 'reptilian' behaviour which is non-compliant or even aggressive—especially if the teacher is controlling and dominant. There is, unfortunately, plenty of opportunity for these student behaviours in the teacher-led model we have in much of our secondary teaching. However, when the teacher knows the individual students better, has them for more hours in the week and plays the facilitator and coach rather than being the fount of all knowledge, there is less room for conflict and more time for engagement with learning. So it can be with competency-based teaching.

In competency-based teaching the teacher does not play the traditional role of chalk and talk. In competency-based lessons, the subject matter is the vehicle through which we as teachers develop the dispositions and behaviours we want. The teacher is not the 'sage on the stage' but the 'guide on the side', generating less conflict and more motivation. We need to think differently

about content and delivery in order to engage the emotional brain for learning.

Campaign for Learning – State of the Nation Survey

Results from a survey in 2008 demonstrated developments over the last ten years in students' perceptions of how they learn and how they want to learn.

How do students prefer to learn?

56% prefer practical (35% in 1998)

37% prefer computers

17% from a teacher (29% in 1998)

How do students actually experience learning in school?

65% copy from board or book

63% listening to a teacher talking for a long time

(These scores had been steadily declining until shooting back up in 2008.)

'All learning has an emotional base'

What engages the emotional brain? Drama, suspense and celebration do. The emotional brain loves novelty and originality instead of the same stale old diet. How often are students distracted by a few flakes of snow or a wasp in the room? But the strange paradox is that students also love to be part of something which feels comfortable and where they can feel confident.

What do we remember? We remember what makes an impact in our emotional brain—challenge, colour, enthusiasm, humour, mystery and intrigue, music, rhythm, rhyme and, of course, praise, maybe even love. A child will always work harder for the teacher they love and who loves them. But how can you create that sort of rapport with a child you see for only two hours a week?

What the brain needs for optimal motivation

We have made huge progress in our understanding of the brain and how learning works. The following points (drawn from the combined work of Singer et al. which is cited by Eric Jensen in *The Learning Brain* (1995)) identify some of the main features of how classrooms should feel and look, and which are now seen as essential for engagement with learning:

- A degree of (student) control or choice over the learning taking place.
- The learning must have some kind of relevance and meaning that is related to needs.
- The learning must have distinctive, thematic, 'real world' contexts.
- The learning environment must be risk-free, playful and safe.
- Positive social bonding is a core element of the learning experience.
- There should be flexible goals that are low stress and high challenge.
- Hope—there must be a belief that the learning outcomes can be achieved.

Some of these factors are present some of the time in schools but a curriculum that is compartmentalised and lessons which are restricted by time, place and person make it hard for teachers to create the above conditions for learning. In addition, the reward and incentive schemes used in schools to create motivation can be counterproductive. A study by Teresa Amabile of Brandeis University (1989) found that long-term rewards just don't work—especially for creativity. Intrinsic enjoyment of learning for its own sake is much more productive (see also Alfie Kohn's *Punished by Rewards* (1999)).

The Projects

The sample projects provided here attempt to combine crucial subject content in a way that is relevant to students' lives. The projects are designed to engage students in active learning which will develop the skills required by the KS3 curriculum. Each project has the following format: a project scheme of work with the PLTS objectives, followed by lesson materials for the students and separate teacher notes giving a model for delivery. These projects are simply a starting point to help you develop your own projects and link in your own subjects and skills for your competency curriculum. We expect the projects to be amended and developed for each school's context. The only compulsory elements are the first project and the focus on the PLTS competences as part of the assessment model.

Brain Breakthrough

The first project contains crucial content on the brain and how it learns. This work helps students understand more about their brains, the PLTS and why they matter. It is best to complete this project first as it introduces concepts such as emotional intelligence, learning styles and multiple intelligence. These concepts are important to give students a language for learning which they can use throughout their competency course. Developing the PLTS effectively will depend on the students learning about metacognition and how reflection can enhance thinking.

Brain Breakthrough also introduces students to teamwork and how to work effectively together. As many of the following projects will involve working in teams, it is vital to explore what makes a good team member and how students can improve their teamworking skills.

An important part of this project deals with interpersonal skills and how to consciously develop them. There is also an examination of the nature of thinking skills. The final part of this project involves the students exploring an aspect of neuroscience that interests them and sharing it with the whole class.

The project also introduces students to the concept of self-assessment of the PLTS and keeping track of their progress. An essential foundation for a really effective PLTS competency curriculum is for students to be able to take control of their learning and thinking skills

Much of the content of this project would normally be delivered in PSHEE or Learning to Learn lessons. This project can be supplemented with extra lessons from Jackie Beere's *The Learner's Toolkit* as required.

Fair Trade

This project provides an opportunity to consider world trade and how it impacts on all of us. Students use data-handling skills to analyse a government's spending plans and have the chance to create their own fair trade product and sell it. They will investigate worldwide trade and the ethical elements of globalisation, including presenting their research findings to each other. This project has many subject links and many opportunities to develop the PLTS in the group activities. Learning is demonstrated through presentations and assessment of progress against the PLTS in the Tracker Pack.

Money, Money, Money

This project addresses the challenging issues of managing money and the concepts of wealth and materialism. Students have to investigate how to design budgets for various projects such as refurbishing their classroom. It also includes a

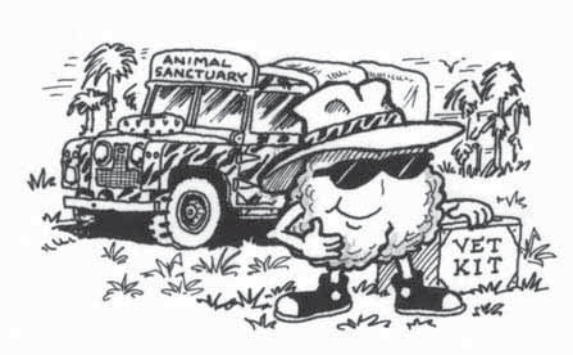
self- assessment tool to help students understand how they act as spenders and a design element in which they consider how to create and design their own currency. The project includes a Community of Enquiry activity where the students undertake controlled philosophical discussion group work, examining whether being rich makes you happy. Abstract thinking skills are developed here as well as speaking and listening competences.

There are clear links to functional numeracy and PSHEE in this project and there is also a link to a Bible story which considers our own personal relationship with money. The usual elements of teamwork and communication skills are developed through the activities and there is an opportunity to link the content with the historical impact of the 2008-9 'credit crunch'.

Saving Planet Earth

This project develops independent research skills and is related to the environmental issues of real concern to students in the twenty-first century. Following the reading of a short story which engages thinking about how man impacts on the planet, students can relate this topic to their own lives. The project begins with areas for teamwork and research and goes on to develop opportunities for creative thinking in which students create drama, art or music productions to represent their ideas.

In addition, the students have to apply their thinking skills to design eco-friendly homes or re-cycling projects as part of their teamwork activities. There are many links from this project to the Science and Geography curriculum as well as English and ICT assessment opportunities.



WHAT SORT OF THINKER ARE YOU?

ACTIVITY 10 PROJECT 1 1 HOUR

PLTS objective: To extend your thinking and develop metacognition.

GET EXCITED!

What sort of thinker are you? Are you more of a creative or logical thinker? We know that we can be clever in many ways, but what about the way we think when we are learning. If you had a jigsaw puzzle to do what would you do first? What do you do when you have a new computer or mobile phone—read the instructions or try it out until you get it right?

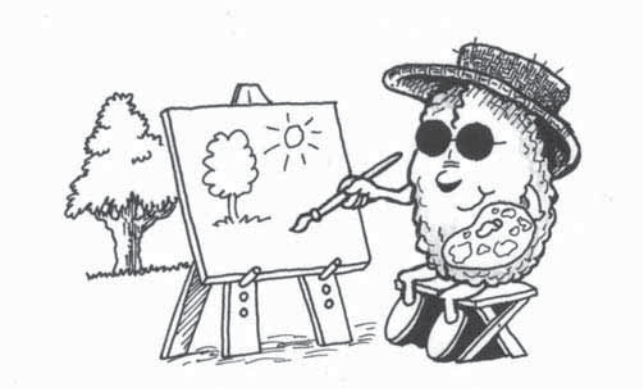
MAIN ACTIVITY

If you can make the logical and creative parts of your brain work well together when they need to then that makes your brain very powerful.

Tick some of these that you like:

Logical	**Creative**
Writing	Ideas
Logic	Intuition
Numbers	Daydreams
Analysing	Sport
Reading	Playing music
Sequencing	The big picture
Language	Rhythm
Detail	Colour
Spelling	Imagination

These two halves need to work together to make our brains work really well. For example, when we are doing a jigsaw puzzle we sort out the pieces using colour and shape but we have to think about the 'big picture' and imagine how it all fits together to get it right.



WHAT SORT OF THINKER ARE YOU? – CONTINUED

ACTIVITY 10 PROJECT 1 PAGE 2

PLTS objective: To extend your thinking and develop metacognition.

To help understand the way your brain works answer these questions 'yes' or 'no':

1. I organise facts and material well.
2. I work step by step.
3. I can be impatient.
4. I read instructions before starting.
5. I like to work things out on paper.
6. I like working on my own.
7. I like to make lists.
8. I can concentrate well.
9. I like reading.
10. I enjoy working with numbers.

More 'yes' than 'no'? You may be more of a logical thinker.

Now answer these questions 'yes' or 'no':

11. I prefer variety and excitement.
12. I like to doodle a lot.
13. I love trying out new ideas.
14. I think of creative solutions.
15. I like new experiences.
16. I just try out ideas as I go along.
17. I prefer to flick through a magazine starting at the back.
18. I make decisions based on gut feelings.
19. I find it hard to concentrate quite often.
20. I prefer art to reading and Maths.

More 'yes' than 'no'? You may be more of a creative thinker.

If you have a fairly equal number of yes/no answers you are in the middle, which is an excellent place to be because you are using all of your brain for learning!

WHAT SORT OF THINKER ARE YOU? – CONTINUED

PLTS objective: To extend your thinking and develop metacognition.

LEARNING HEALTH CHECK

Using *all* of your brain can make you more clever, so once you know which way you tend to think watch out for these health warnings.

Top tips for whole brain learning:

- Be open to trying new approaches.
- Don't get bogged down in detail.
- Practice working well with others.
- Vary your learning styles and habits to keep your creative brain working.
- Don't forget details—one step at a time.
- Make yourself do some planning and prioritising in advance.
- Avoid procrastination (putting things off until the last minute!).
- Avoid distraction and distracting others.
- Don't rush in without thinking.
- Read instructions and check work when finished.
- Plan deadlines and check them out.

TASK

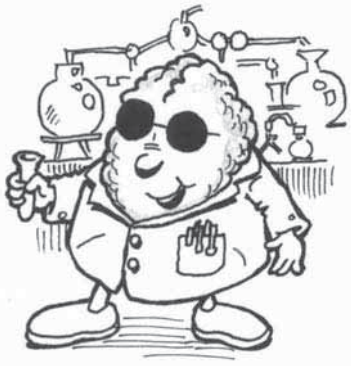
Think of a job or career you would like. How would you use your logical and creative thinking in this role?

Now decide which is the most useful.

What sort of careers do creative thinkers have?

What sort of careers do logical thinkers have?

What sort of career could you have if you were good at both?



HOW DID I DO?

Write a statement to describe yourself as a thinker. Think of one challenge to set yourself to grow your brain and record it in your Tracker Pack.

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Teacher's notes: Putting your PLTS into practice

Resources: Lined/plain paper, access to ICT, coloured pens, coloured paper.

PLTS objective

By the end of these lessons students will identify questions about learning, carry out research and communicate their PLTS learning.

Get excited!

The teacher should make clear that trying new things can help grow the whole brain.

Main learning activities

Students will plan and carry out their own research into preferred styles of learning and will present their findings to the rest of the class.

Students will use their teamwork skills to approach this task and the teacher should encourage students before they begin to establish what the success criteria should be for the presentations and agree on what each presentation should include—the worksheet aids this process.

Students will offer each others' presentations praise and advice to help develop their peer-assessment skills and provide effective feedback.

Optional learning tree display work

Students can create 'leaves' for their class learning tree by drawing around their hands and writing on them what they have learnt from project Brain Breakthrough—looking through their Tracker Packs should jog their memories! The hands can then be stuck onto the learning tree on the wall as a way of reviewing and recording their progress.

How did I do?

Students should review their Tracker Pack ratings of themselves.

Subject links

Learning to Learn
Study Skills
English/literacy
ICT

It is widely acknowledged that students need to be flexible and self-motivated if they are to thrive in our rapidly changing global community. *The Competency Curriculum Toolkit* enables teachers to nurture these and other personal, learning and thinking skills through carefully constructed cross-curricular, themed projects. It explores the benefits of a competency-based curriculum for students aged 10-14 and provides a range of resources for implementing creative learning in schools. *The Competency Curriculum Toolkit* will enable you to:

- Teach a project–based approach that delivers progress in key personal competencies
- Nurture students' resilience, self–reliance and commitment to learning
- Help students develop the skills and competencies of learning how to learn, leadership and teamwork

Models for delivery and assessment, schemes of work for projects as well as sample lessons to use in the classroom are provided. In addition, the CD-ROM has all the worksheets necessary to carry out the projects. This is a comprehensive toolkit for all those wishing to nurture independent learners.

"It is a superb toolkit. It has the right instrument for the right job and the teacher's task is to work out what the youngsters need. It oozes with practical suggestions, practical ideas and opportunites for young people. Enjoy it… and use it."

Professor Mick Waters

"This book should be the guide for every Year 7 teacher–and would go a very long way to launching a new breed of can-do self sufficient learners."

Colin Rose, Founder Accelerated Learning Systems

"This is a rich, exemplary handbook for the kind of competency-focussed KS3 curriculum that we have been moving towards for several years and is now fully promoted by QCA."

Paul Ginnis, author *The Teachers Toolkit*

"After reading through [*The Competency Curriculum Toolkit*] I am convinced more than ever that the development of PLTS is not a way to motivate, develop, engage, challenge and inspire young people, it is THE way."

John Jones, writer, presenter and educational consultant

"Jackie and Helen are not talking about doing away with knowledge. They are describing in detail, in easy steps, in a systematic and proven manner, how you can help children acquire knowledge in a way that teaches them the skills to survive whatever the twenty first century throws at them, and do better at school in the process."

Ian Gilbert, Founder Independent Thinking Ltd

Jackie Beere, best-selling author of *The Learner's Toolkit* ISBN: 9781845900700, is a consultant trainer and School Improvement partner, having been headteacher at Campion School, Northants. In 2002 Jackie was awarded the OBE for her services to education and is also an associate of Independent Thinking Ltd www.independentthinking.co.uk.

Helen Boyle has spent the last ten years working in education, leading and implementing innovative teaching and learning initiatives and since 2004 she has been the lead teacher at Campion School, developing the RSA Opening Minds programme at key Stage 3.

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