

Building Learning Power at Seymour East Primary School



Seymour East Primary School, established in 1967 is situated within the historically significant town of Seymour located on the Goulburn River, 93km north of Melbourne via the Hume Freeway.

Our school works in partnership with the parents and the community to meet the individual needs of students by establishing and maintaining a caring, healthy, challenging and co-operative learning environment. It is our strong belief that students must feel safe and happy to learn effectively. High expectations are held for all students in terms of academic achievement and conduct. These expectations are supported by a comprehensive curriculum utilising the latest in technology

In 2006 Seymour East adopted Guy Claxton's approach 'Building Learning Power' in the classroom. Our goal is to ensure that Building Learning Power (BLP) is incorporated into planning and referred to in terms of VELs and assessment.

All aspects of classroom life are being influenced by BLP. This is evident in the language used by teachers and students. A noticeable change has occurred in teachers' approaches, questioning and responses, discussions and student reflections.

BLP is becoming embedded in the culture of the school. The fact that everyone has taken this learning journey together has made the ride smoother and more rewarding. BLP is seen as a benefit for the whole school community.

DEVELOPING A THINKING CULTURE

Guy Claxton's model for Building Learning Power highlights the importance of fostering thinking processes and the belief that children can be empowered in their own learning with the right opportunities. A number of strategies are currently being implemented in our school. These include:

- At the end of each term all students now set their own individual goals, which are also reflected on and reported to parents.
- Each week children reflect on their learning and record in a learning log something they have achieved or got better at.
- Staff work together, sharing ideas, to ensure a common language and vision.
- Units also have an end of term planning day during which they review the term and plan for the next term. BLP is an integral part of this now, with specific reference especially in the integrated studies activities and in accordance with VELs. Thinking tools such as [Rubrics](#), [Lotus charts](#) and [KWL](#) are being used more powerfully.
- Peer observation - staff pair up to visit each other's classrooms each term. Teachers are very positive about this experience during which they observe and reflect on focuses, engagement and how BLP is incorporated into the activities. The feedback is constructive and provides opportunities to discuss how BLP is being developed in the classroom.
- The staff reflect on their own personal learning goals each term in accordance to the school implementation plan of which BLP is one of the major components.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

Teachers at Seymour East PS have used and shared the following ideas with other staff members.

I used the Spyforce game in maths this week. The kids thought it was great and it brought in lots of BLP capacities. The class is organized into teams. Each team has a leader who records and stays in the team area. The leader then sends out 'spies' to check and bring back information from a grid. Each team is allocated a number of tokens which are used each time a team member looks at the grid. Our grid consisted of 6 squares. Each square contained a shape of different colour and position. Noticing, questioning, collaboration and listening were vital skills. There was a lot of talk before and after about these aspects. The students found the task much more difficult than we imagined they would but enjoyed it greatly. We'll continue to use the activity and hope to see improvement in the required skills and capacities.

We introduced BLP in a sport session. This excerpt from a teacher's learning journal sums it up:

We began our sport session today by looking at the 4 R's chart and asking what learning muscles we might be using in playing games or sports. I had envisaged that we would be focusing on collaboration but the students came up with lots of other thinking skills as well – planning, reasoning, noticing, perseverance, imitation etc.. The ideas and justifications they had gave an indication that they are developing their thinking due to the work we are doing on BLP.

We use our weekly home learning to explain aspects of BLP to our parents, which spreads the language across the school community. In our writing workshops we have been developing reasoning skills by developing exposition texts. Students have concentrated on looking at problems and how we can work through the problems with reason. The blank page in our home learning journal is focusing on the children's imaginative learning skills. This helps the students to visualise and put themselves in others' position and understand different experiences. Letting the mind explore and play.

I have found student learning journals and learning walls to be an excellent way of students acknowledging achievements and improving learning outcomes.

I find the interactive whiteboard to be a great resource. I use it to show the learning and BLP goals for a lesson. In maths this week I used it for learning fractions. I listed all the goals for the week but hid them only to be revealed by clicking on them. It worked well because it made it easy to go back each day to remind ourselves of what we had covered and reflect on our learning. The interactive whiteboards provide enormous visual opportunities to extend students' thinking skills and model various pathways and solutions when problem solving.

Visit the Seymour East Primary School website at <http://www.seymourestps.vic.edu.au/>

Visit the Building Learning Power website at <http://www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk/>