

# Building learning power

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**T**here is a growing international consensus that education needs to change to prepare all young people more effectively for 21st-century life. The critical issue is how this change can be brought about. Over the past 20 years, my colleagues and I have developed an approach to this problem called Building Learning Power (BLP), which is based on five principles.

First, education should prepare pupils for life after school - not just for further study.

This seems obvious, yet thinking about it raises some important questions about the way teachers actually teach in their classrooms.

Second, education should be useful and valuable to all pupils in a school system. Not all of them will get 80% and more in tests and examinations, and not all of them know exactly what they want to do after school.

We need to build the kind of resilience and resourcefulness that will allow all pupils to discover what they will be great at, and give them the strength and capabilities to pursue those ambitions.

Third, today's pupils will have to thrive in a world that is full of change, complexity, risk, opportunity and the need to take individual responsibility. This can be stressful and confusing, and our pupils need the skills and attitudes to make sense of this world.

The fourth belief is that our understanding of "ability" is too closely tied to academic achievement.

We need to understand that real-world intelligence is broader than this, that it is not fixed at birth and all pupils can be supported in building it up.

And last, many of us believe that vague notions of "key competencies", "21st-century skills" and "lifelong learning" often exist more in vision statements than in the practical realities of day-to-day teaching. It is time to really do something to change the culture in schools and the habits of teachers, so that these aims are really fulfilled.

This approach to teaching and learning was discussed in depth during my visit to South Africa this year at a conference for heads and deputy heads of all the different brands of Curro schools. The aim is that, by 2018, the practical methods of BLP will be embedded across all subjects in all of Curro's schools.

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This is the third in a series of five articles on the subject of 21st-century learning, developed in partnership with Curro Schools. To comment on Twitter, use the hashtag

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