Western University

From the SelectedWorks of Sam Frankel

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The Social Learning Agenda - Briefing Paper - for All Party Parliamentary Group for Children

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/sam_frankel/2/
Social Learning & Well-Being:

The Social Learning Agenda is about inviting a school community to come together to lead change to establish a foundation, which allows each individual child to maximise their learning potential. This foundation demands that children are in the best ‘state’ to learn, as schools focus on the individual child’s ‘readiness’ for lifelong learning. Equipping children to engage with their well being\(^1\) is therefore integral to our approach.

Our presentation will consider:

1. The foundation for social learning
2. Why social learning
3. What is social learning
4. The impact of social learning

The Social Learning Agenda transforms individual well-being as children (and adults) become partners in their learning environments, experiencing a sense of control and purpose in their own learning, as school communities:

- **value the individual child:** recognising their competence as social agents and investing in it, thus equipping children as learners now and throughout their lives.

- **provide a strategic framework:** maximising learning potential through promoting the social learner at all levels of the school community focusing on the building blocks; ethos, community, lead, speak and act.

- **make the social aspects of learning visible & explicit:** therefore usable and measurable.

- **pursue positive impact:** through reflection, research and results.

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\(^1\) Our definitions of ‘well being’ here is taken from the extensive research of the Children’s Society and their Good Childhood Project. They define subjective well being, which is an individual’s assessment of their own well being, in relation to two factors, first a focus on personal levels of life satisfaction and second through considering feelings (moods and emotions) (Good Childhood Report, 2014:9).
The Centre of Excellence for Social Learning: Purpose & Aims

Our work is centred on furthering children as Social Learners, through

- allowing the individual child to grow in awareness of themselves and others,
- equipping children with the knowledge and skills so they can successfully navigate the complexities of the social world that they are part of,
- a foundation to maximise learning potential in school and increase children’s participation and engagement in their families and communities.

School communities are invited to respond to The Social Learner through an ‘agenda’ focused on 5 key areas of attention:

- Ethos - establish children as partners
- Community - a space for the social learner
- Lead - a learning process
- Speak - create a language for social engagement
- Act - provide opportunities for practice
Engaging with each area of attention (the 5 pillars of the social learning agenda outlined above) invites school communities to:

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<th>Pillars</th>
<th>Practical Aims</th>
<th>Schools invited to…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value the individual child</td>
<td>review the school's vision - working with children and others to unite the school community (reflected in programmes such as the ‘belonging project’ highlighted in this presentation)</td>
<td>(an example list)</td>
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<td>re-consider how children are positioned within the school community (recognising the need of working together to allow children ownership of their learning)</td>
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<td>Provide a strategic framework</td>
<td>review of the school’s mission statement and consequently those learning attributes that the community seeks to advance</td>
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<td>review the school’s behaviour policy (as children and adults work together to engage with themes such as rights, responsibilities and respect)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make social learning visible &amp; explicit</td>
<td>define those social learning attributes, embedding them in daily practice through techniques such as split level learning objectives (where lessons see children focus on both defined academic and social learning goals)</td>
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<td>target ‘projects’ on social learning within specific curriculum areas such as physical education or literacy</td>
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<td>Pursue positive impact</td>
<td>prioritise social learning within the school improvement plan linked to ‘action research’ (children and staff)</td>
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<td>focus ongoing training, evaluation and discussion</td>
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<td>measure and review attainment goals as school communities work towards their notion of ‘secondary readiness’</td>
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The Social Learning Agenda in action:

Following an Action Plan Day (an interactive social learning audit with all members of the school community) schools develop a plan. These plans are unique to that social learning community.

These plans, which mirror the generally accepted school improvement model, reflect an ambition for social learning to form part of all interactions within school.

These plans are unique to that social learning community, although all draw on the following 5 components within the Curriculum Model below in order to implement social learning within their specific community.

A. represents the whole school approach through the transmission of a shared ethos, highlighted for example through a defined list of learning attributes, behaviour policies and whole school events such as assemblies.

B. represents any lesson within the curriculum, however such lessons, through the use of split level objectives, weight a social learning target, such as developing an aspect of collaboration, as the priority. The learning activities reflect this.

C. represents any lesson within the curriculum, however such lessons, through the use of split level objectives, weight an academic target, such as the rules of multiplication, as the priority. The learning activities reflect this.
D. represents projects with a whole school focus that seek to highlight defined learning attributes. These might be reflected in whole school projects on belonging, innovation and enterprise, which will be interpreted differently for different year groups.

E. represents additional project opportunities specific to year groups, for example Holywell Explorers (an outdoor learning activity) was just for children in Years 1 and 2.
Some examples of what this might look like:

**Case Study School 1**

- Learning attributes agreed
- Leadership roles: Job Shop
- Holywell Explorers
- Pupil Research Teams
- Language for negotiation
- Sense of belonging
- Mixed year group: themed days
- Effective task management: focussing on behaviours
- Rights and responsibilities: Local
- Rights and responsibilities: international
- Orienteering and other related sports activities

**Case Study School 2**

- Learning attributes agreed
- Split level learning objectives
- Whole school rights and responsibilities linked to behaviour policy
- Pupil Parliament
- Forest schools
- News 'n views
- Stay, play and learn
- Collective worship
- Teacher led development work
- Developing children as leaders
- Sense of belonging
- Young enterprise
- Chatty maths
- Enrichment days
- Developments in sport

We are delighted that the Social Learning Agenda is increasingly being implemented in a range of schools. We continue to look to expand this.
The Centre of Excellence for Social Learning: Impact and Influence

The views of children

What children say

Baseline interviews (June 2014) and follow up discussions (November 2014) indicated that there was;

- a greater awareness of the school’s values,
- an increase in the children's enthusiasm and engagement,
- a significant change in the children's ability to 'reflect upon and articulate' their views,
- a greater breadth of language to talk about their thoughts and experiences
- a change in the way children saw themselves as learners
- a change in the children’s perception of adults

The views of OfSTED

Behaviour is exemplary and relationships with staff are highly positive. Pupils are exceptionally polite, well mannered and motivated. They work well together to discuss ideas and support one another, particularly when pupils are newly arrived from other countries.

Pupils’ excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to school make an outstanding contribution to their good learning and progress. Pupils are exceptionally keen to learn. They strive to give of their very best and work hard.

One of the many strengths of this highly inclusive school is the way in which pupils from many different backgrounds work and play happily together. The ‘Holywell Explorers’ sessions where pupils engage in high quality, practical-learning activities in the school grounds support their collaborative learning experiences and encourage curiosity.

Case study school one (Inspection Report May 2013)

The pupils’ very positive attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to their excellent learning and rapid progress. Pupils of all ages are very keen to do well. They work hard at all times, listen carefully to their teachers and do their utmost to meet their expectations.

Case study school three (Inspection Report September 2014)
Biographies

Co-Directors

**John Fowler**: has had over 20 years experience as a head teacher, Holywell School was his third headship. John was an Ofsted Registered Inspector, has been a Local Authority Advisor, notably leading a ‘teaching and learning’ team and has advised local authorities on leadership development, as well as continuing to offer independent advice. Holywell, under John’s leadership, has contributed to national and local projects focussed on enhancing ‘pupil provision mapping’. John has for many years been involved with ideas around ‘learning to learn’, as part of this he was a founding member of the Teaching and Learning Alliance and has shared his ideas to a range of forums as he has sought to further such debate.

**Dr Sam Frankel**: A passion to research, create and inspire sits at the centre of Sam’s desire to further children’s ability to navigate their everyday lives. This focus has provided Sam with the opportunity to combine researching, writing and teaching at both an academic and practical level (though projects in schools and communities). As a consultant Sam has designed local, national and international educational projects and as Director of Act 4 has worked with tens of thousands of children across the country. He is an Honorary Fellow at the University of Sheffield, attached to the Centre for the Study of Childhood and Youth, and is currently a Visiting Professor at the school of Childhood and Social Institutions, Kings University College at the University of Western Ontario, Canada. Sam’s publications reflect his interests in children’s engagement with their social worlds, particularly linked to the daily applications of themes such as citizenship and morality.

Forthcoming Book - Spring 2015 (Sam Frankel and John Fowler):
Journey to Outstanding: 5 building blocks to maximise children’s social learning potential

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