The Highland Council	Agenda Item	9.
ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE **21 August 2013**	Report No	ACS/69/13

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Learning Policy 2013

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport

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Summary:

This report summarises the culmination of 20 years of work developing Learning and Teaching policies in Highland. The 2013 version, for the first time, aligns Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment into a single coherent policy.

1.   Background

1.1   Over the past two decades the Highland Learning and Teaching working group has become one of the most established. It has met regularly and, while there have been changes to personnel, there have been key individuals who have ensured continuity of thinking and development over the past 20 years.

1.2   The mix has been crucial: primary and secondary; new and more experienced staff; classroom teachers and officers; colleagues with different philosophies and approaches. There have been sub-groups and individual research groups looking at specific issues. They have been outward looking, bringing north leading thinkers on a regular basis, to engage with Highland teachers and to take forward our thinking.

1.3   Most important of all, the group has regularly reviewed and revised the Learning and Teaching Policy and associated toolkit, see **Appendix 1**. Gradually, it evolved in to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Policy. The most recent version aligns Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment in a succinct, readable distillation of the key components of a modern curriculum and pedagogy from a Highland perspective.

2.   Learning Policy 2013

2.1   This 2013 revision of the Highland Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy reflects changes in our educational thinking since the launch of the original version in 2003. We have shortened the title – Learning Policy. But we have not diminished the significance of our collective ideas about the curriculum, learning, teaching, assessment, and professional development. Our Learning Policy has been written for Education, Culture and Sport staff, parents, young people and others involved in lifelong learning. Its principles apply to learners of all ages in all learning contexts.

2.2 Our Learning Policy wholeheartedly endorses the educational purposes described in Curriculum for Excellence. We aim to develop ourselves and those we teach as: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Our success in this aim will depend on how far all involved feel secure and valued, and the extent to which we all learn how to think effectively in different contexts.

2.3 Our Learning Policy is supported by its Toolkit and the Highland CPD Reflection Framework. These professional learning materials are all available on Glow. Experience suggests that these materials are best used collectively. They have a professional responsibility to improve their skills and knowledge and should actively seek out learning opportunities to do so. The Toolkit and Framework offer just such opportunities for learning through reading and reflection, dialogue and 'doing'.

2.4 In order to achieve school improvement, managers have a crucial facilitating role to play in collegiate activity. As part of School Improvement through Self-Evaluation (SISE), managers and other leaders of learning should apply the principles and foster the characteristics of the Highland Learning Policy when facilitating CPD. Leaders of learning should:

- provide a strategic stimulus through Learning Policy development
- encourage informal and formal dialogue to engage with principles and improve practice
- facilitate groups (learning communities) within the establishment and across schools
- organise and participate in learning visits and action research in order to improve individual practice and share good practice
- advertise and facilitate attendance at appropriate external CPD events and engage the learner in subsequent dialogue including identification of next steps.

3. Getting it Right for Every Learner

3.1 No learner of any age can be fully effective if he or she feels unhappy, or troubled or insecure. It is the responsibility of the school community – school staff, young people, parents and carers, professionals from partner agencies and others in the local community – to work together to ensure that each learner feels safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. But young people believe, and research consistently shows, that the teacher has a crucial role in this process. Quite simply, the teacher makes the difference.

3.2 Over the last sixty years, young people's ideas about what makes a successful teacher have been consistent. These ideas focus on personal qualities – how the teacher acts as a role model – building relationships with individuals and the class as a whole, fostering relationships amongst learners. According to young people, successful teachers are:

- Respectful - genuinely like young people, care about them, listen to them, enjoy their company and do not disrespect them individually or collectively.

- Open - prepared to challenge their own thinking and admit they may be wrong

- Aspirational - genuinely believe that all learners can succeed; have high expectations

- Assertive - decisive and confident, firm but fair
- Encouraging - positive, supportive, welcoming error as an opportunity to learn

- Enthusiastic - believe in what they are teaching and enjoy the job
- Humorous - show humour naturally and put learners at ease

4. Key Principles

4.1 Our starting point is inclusion. Learners should not be subject to discrimination - intentional or otherwise - on the grounds of their social circumstances, gender, race, religion, cultural beliefs, disability or sexual orientation.

4.2 Our first step is the curriculum – the 'what' of learning in relation to skills and knowledge. We cannot divorce what we learn from how we go about learning it. Each school community, then, should develop a rationale for its curriculum, one not only based on the seven principles of *Building the Curriculum 3,* but also on the values and needs of those who make up the community. Many of these values and needs will be shared across Highland, the nation and, indeed, across Western Europe. But there will be a difference – perhaps in emphasis, perhaps in actual content. This difference will reflect local circumstances – geographical, social, cultural, historical. As a result, each school's curriculum should be unique; it should demonstrate the difference. Our key principles follow in 4.3 -. In the statements which follow, 'teachers' comprise all staff undertaking a teaching role.

4.3 **Engagement**

Learners need motivation. They should have a significant reason for engaging in the learning process and positive feelings about involvement.

Learners – especially the young – are often self-motivating; they are desperate to find out, know, understand – it's as natural as breathing. Learning brings its own emotional and/or intellectual reward. Equally often, though, learners require an external incentive to provide motivation – an award, a certificate, a prize, praise, promotion. To be effective, such incentives must be meaningful to the learner.

As teachers – often through personal example – we should foster a love of learning by nurturing self-motivation. But we should also motivate – inspire, challenge and praise. We should show that we value all learners, creating an

ethos of achievement and organising tasks which will bring rewards that matter from the learner's point of view.

4.4 Participation

Learners need to participate actively in the learning process. They should take as much responsibility as possible for their own learning.

Learners should lead whenever possible. They should make informed choices about what, where and how they learn; they should self and peer assess. Learners should be aware of themselves as learners, conscious of their own preferred styles of learning, confident enough to seek help, perceptive enough to know where help may be best sought, skilful enough to access help readily.

As teachers, we are lifelong learners – a state of mind which should inform our professional practice, development and our own wider learning. Through collegiality, we should create learning communities in our classrooms, establishments and beyond.

4.5 Dialogue

Learners need to share ideas and emotions through verbal and/or multi-sensory dialogue. Real understanding takes place when learners work through with someone else what is to be learned and how far they have been successful.

Learners, where possible, should talk through their learning regularly with their teachers, their peers, parents and others. They should question, answer, expound, challenge assertions, support propositions, offer alternatives, suggest solutions …

As teachers – through personal example and setting standards in our questioning and feedback – we should create the conditions in which dialogue can thrive, where self-confidence and respect for others underpin all interaction, where achievement is celebrated and error welcomed as a stepping stone to success.

4.6 Thinking

Learners need to think. This thinking should be critical and creative, robust and flexible in order that all may understand and achieve their potential whatever the context.

Learners should be positively critical: questioning, investigating, testing, seeking the truth about themselves, others and the world in which they live. They should be creative: imagining, expressing, exploring the boundaries of the possible so that there are no limits to ambition.

As teachers we should be thinkers: reflective professionals who are self-aware, systematically evaluative, focused on our own improvement and that of those in our care. We should use the language of thinkers, ask the questions that matter, enable and empower other learners to ask those questions, so that they and those who respond may make their thinking explicit. Crucially, despite the pressures, we ourselves should take time to think and talk about learning.

5. Key Characteristics of Highland Learning Policy

5.1 When we reflect about our own practice and engage in learning visits, over time we should see and celebrate the following:

- People welcoming other people, enjoying challenge, hard work and each other's company in an ethos where error is not feared, but seen as a stepping stone to success

- Learners reviewing prior work, making choices, discussing and agreeing what needs to be done and what success will look like for the learner and the class

- Learners engaging in work which meets their individual and collective needs, which stimulates and challenges, which takes full account of local, Highland, national and international contexts and settings

- Learners leading - taking roles of responsibility, exploiting information technology, asking each other thoughtful questions, engaging in dialogue as a class and in groups, modelling processes and presenting knowledge and skills to each other and 'external' audiences

- Learners reflecting about their own progress, giving and receiving feedback focused on success criteria, agreeing next steps and taking action to achieve improvement.

6. Next Step

6.1 Behind the policy lies a developing Learning Toolkit and Framework for Learning. Both contain rich resources for professional learning. The next step, therefore, is to link the Toolkit, Framework for Learning to the new General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) re-accreditation scheme for teachers, known as Professional Update. Details of the scheme were contained in a report ACS-54-13 (36kb pdf) to the May 2013 ACS Committee.

7. Implications

7.1 There are no Resource, Legal, Equalities, Climate Change and Risk implications in the above policy.

8. **Recommendation**
8.1   Members are asked to :- • Comment on the Highland Learning Policy 2013 and to • Endorse the approach being taken in Highland to link curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment in a single coherent policy.

Designation:

Date: 5 August 2013

Author: Dave McCartney, QIO and Calum MacSween, Head of Education

Background Paper:
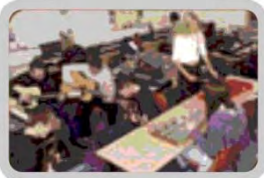
Appendix 1   - Toolkit Exemplar

Appendix 2 - What is an Assessment is for Learning (AifL) School?

The Highland Council Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Learning, Teaching & Assessment Toolkit

Effective Feedback

HGIOS

- 5.2 Teaching for Effective Learning
- 5.4 Assessment for Learning

Effective Feedback

Feedback was one of the key elements of formative assessment identified by Black and Wiliam in Inside the Black Box.

In research by John Hattie of the University of Auckland which rated the factors having the most impact on learning, effective feedback was No 1.

But what is effective feedback?

Effective Feedback

"As teachers – through personal example and setting standards in our questioning and provision of feedback – we should create the conditions in which communication and dialogue can thrive, where self confidence and respect for others underpin all interaction, where achievement is celebrated and error welcomed as a stepping stone to success."

Highland Learning Teaching and Assessment Policy

The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

**Learning ,
Teaching &
Assessment
Toolkit**

Effective Feedback

Agenda

- Activity 1- Introduction / Starter Activity (5 mins)

- Activity 2 – How's it going / feedback (10-20 mins)

- Activity 3 – New Learning (25-40 mins)

- Activity 4 – Personal Action Planning (10 mins)

- Activity 5 – Summary of Learning (5 mins)
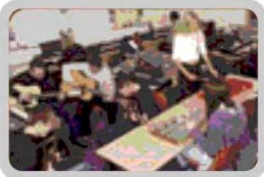
Effective Feedback

Activity 1:   Voice on the table

Think of something that happened in a lesson this year that made you smile. You have a maximum of 30 seconds to tell the group what it is. No one can "pass".
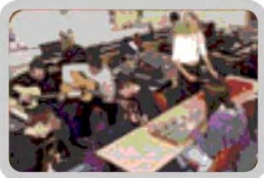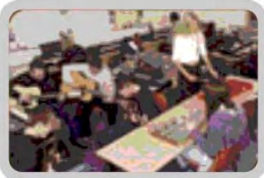
Effective Feedback

New Learning

"If teachers would just sit down with you and tell you how you are doing and things. And if you are not good at something, tell you what you could do. I know I'm not good at spelling. She just says "You'll need to work at your spelling", but I don't know how to."
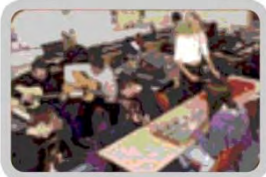*(11 year old)*

Are there aspects of feedback which you feel you could reconsider?

Effective Feedback

Points Arising from Dylan Wiliam

- Giving marks or grades tends to have a negative effect, even when accompanied by helpful comments

- Instructive improvement feedback promotes pupil motivation

- Prompt and positive feedback, reinforcing pupils' efforts, has been shown to raise serotonin levels (high levels of serotonin are associated with enhanced neural networking and higher order thinking, leading to an improved predisposition to learn)

Effective Feedback

7 elements of effective feedback

Feedback for learning is effective when:
- it has class time dedicated to it during/ just after the activity
- it involves dialogue with someone whom the learner trusts
- it is centred on agreed outcome(s)/success criteria
- identification of error is limited to priorities
- the learner takes the initiative – self assesses and shares
- it prioritises improvement exclusively – no grades or marks
- it concludes with clarity of next step(s) and time to act
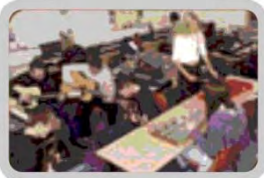
Effective Feedback

Personal Action Planning

Using My Personal Action Plan sheet choose one, or more than one, element from the last activity to reflect on and explore further. This exploration will involve changing your classroom practice over the next few weeks.

Pair-share: Two minutes sharing your plan with your partner, then swap.

Effective Feedback

Summary of Learning

Write your name on the card or post-it and one thing that you have learned in the workshop.

Leave your card or post-it on your way out.
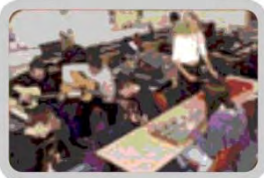
Effective Feedback

Additional Resources or Links
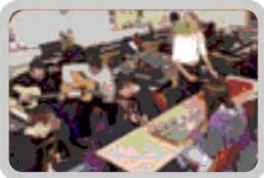
The quality of young people's learning experiences has improved in Portree Primary school through a programme of reflective learning, self-evaluation and pupil empowerment. The Headteacher, staff and pupils talk about the steps taken to achieve this outcome.

Listen as Alan McLean outlines four main drivers of motivation, namely engagement, structure, relevance and feedback.

Sally Howard's workshop on 'Inside the primary black box'

Appendix 2   The Assessment is for Learning School

The starting point for the development of the Highland Learning Policy was the work of Paul Black, Dylan Wiliam, Robert Fisher and others who contributed to the concept of the AifL School. The AifL triangle below continues to underpin our thinking about how a good school learns.

What is an AifL School?
A Place Where Everyone is Learning Together

Our pupils and staff help to set their own learning goals

Our pupils and staff identify and reflect on their own evidence of learning

Our pupils and staff practise self- and peer-assessment

Curriculum

ASSESSMENT **AS** LEARNING

Learning and Teaching

ASSESSMENT **OF** LEARNING

ASSESSMENT **FOR** LEARNING

Staff use a range of evidence from day-to-day activities to check on pupils' progress

Our pupils, staff and parents are clear about what is to be learned and what success would be like

Staff talk and work together to share standards in and across schools

Our pupils and staff are given timely feedback about the quality of their work and how to make it better

Staff use assessment information to monitor their establishment's provision and progress, and to plan for improvement

Our pupils and staff are fully involved in deciding next steps in their learning and identifying who can help

Assessment

Our classroom assessment involves high quality interactions, based on thoughtful questions, careful listening and reflective responses