

Practices for Learning about Learning¹

First element:- noticing learning

This requires:

1. we occasionally *stop the flow* to notice.
2. we cumulatively build up a language for noticing things about our learning.

A Year 3 group has preliminary discussions about their learning – what learning is, how it feels (one said enthusiastically “*I feel dizzy!*”) and so on.

The best way of recounting our experience of learning is through a narrative style, telling the story of what we (increasingly) notice.

Second element: conversations about learning

This starts with prompts which help learners reflect on the experience e.g. a discussion on “*What helps us with our learning?*”, the class above grouped points into four broad categories:

- Doing things: practising, sharing, ...
- Feelings - own and others': positive feelings, ...
- People: family, friends (not much mention of teachers), ...
- Things/resources: objects, materials, ... fingers!

The **most** contributory to their learning? - “feelings”.

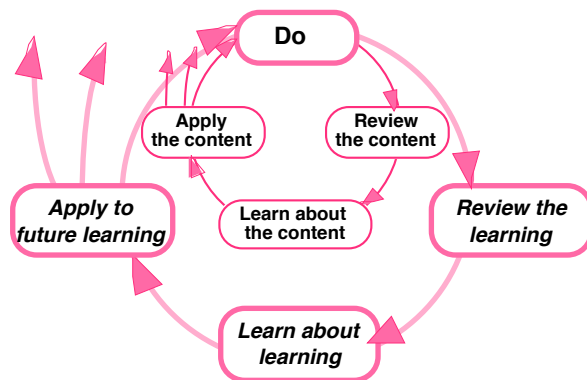
Third element:- reflection.

This can be supported through writing in a notebook dedicated to the experience of learning, often called “a learning log”.

Lynne, 10 years, writes *As I write I notice and understand more too.*”

Fourth element:- making learning an object of learning

We may think of meta-learning as an additional cycle in the learning process², through which metacognitive knowledge about learning is constructed just like any other knowledge, pieced together on the basis of fragmentary data from a range of experiences.



People who have learned about their learning are:

- more likely to transfer, since they recognise the applicability of a strategy in a different-looking context
- more likely to be self-regulated learners, which also builds the autonomy needed for collaborative work to thrive.

Meta-learning promotes the versatile learner

¹ Watkins C. (2001), *Learning about Learning enhances Performance*, London: Institute of Education School Improvement Network (Research Matters series No 13), <http://chriswatkins.net/download/106/>

² Watkins C, Carnell E, Lodge C et al. (2000), *Learning about Learning: resources for supporting effective learning*, London, Routledge. 0-415-22349-0 <http://chriswatkins.net/download/107/>