

Essential reading for a Curriculum for Excellence

Excerpts from key national publications

A Curriculum for Excellence: The Curriculum Review Group (session 2004-2005)

7 Principles

- Challenge and enjoyment
- Breadth
- Progression
- Depth
- Personalisation and choice
- Coherence
- Relevance

4 Values

- Wisdom
- Justice
- Compassion
- Integrity

4 purposes

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Responsible citizens
- Effective contributors

8 Curriculum areas.....

Health and wellbeing
Languages
Mathematics
Science
Social studies
Expressive arts
Technologies
Religious and moral education

4 Cross cutting themes are sustainability; enterprise; creativity; citizenship

Values

“The curriculum should enable all young people to benefit from their education, supporting them in different ways to achieve their potential.”

“It must enable all young people to build up a strong foundation of knowledge and understanding and promote a commitment to considered judgement and ethical action.” (p11)

Purposes

“Our aspiration is to enable all children to develop their capacities as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society.” (p3)

Principles for curriculum design

“Although all should apply at any one stage, the principles will have different emphases as a young person learns and develops.”

Challenge and enjoyment

Young people should find their learning challenging, engaging and motivating. The curriculum should encourage high aspirations and ambitions for all. At all stages, learners of all aptitudes and abilities should experience an appropriate level of challenge, to enable each individual to achieve his or her potential. They should be active in their learning and have opportunities to develop and demonstrate their creativity. There should be support to enable young people to sustain their effort.

Breadth

All young people should have opportunities for a broad, suitably-weighted range of experiences. The curriculum should be organised so that they will learn and develop through a variety of contexts both within the classroom and other aspects of school life.

Progression

Young people should experience continuous progression in their learning from 3 to 18 within a single curriculum framework. Each stage should build upon earlier knowledge and achievements. Young people should be able to progress at a rate which meets their needs and aptitudes, and keep options open so that routes are not closed off too early.

Depth

There should be opportunities for young people to develop their full capacity for different types of thinking and learning. As they progress, they should develop and apply increasing intellectual rigour, drawing different strands of learning together and exploring and achieving more advanced levels of understanding.

Personalisation and choice

The curriculum should respond to individual needs and support particular aptitudes and talents. It should give each young person increasing opportunities for exercising responsible personal choice as they move through their school career. Once they have achieved suitable levels of attainment across a wide range of areas of learning, the choice should become as open as possible. There should be safeguards to ensure that choices are soundly based and lead to successful outcomes.

Coherence

Taken as a whole, children's learning activities should combine to form a coherent experience. There should be clear links between the different aspects of young people's learning, including opportunities for extended activities which draw different strands of learning together.

Relevance

Young people should understand the purposes of their activities. They should see the value of what they are learning and its relevance to their lives, present and future.

"...greater choice and opportunity, ...to realise their individual talents and to help close the opportunity gap by better engaging those who currently switch off from formal education too young."

"...more space in the curriculum to work in depth, and to ensure that young people develop the literacy, numeracy and other essential skills and knowledge..."

"...more space for sport, music, dance, drama, art, learning about health, sustainable development and enterprise, and other experiences that broaden the life experiences - and life chances - of young people." (p4)

Progress and Proposals (March 2006)

"The work on *A Curriculum for Excellence* signals a need to revisit traditional assumptions about the curriculum in Scotland." (p1)

"The curriculum is more than curriculum areas and subjects. At all stages ... the curriculum will include learning through:

- The ethos and life of the school as a community
- Curriculum areas and subjects
- Interdisciplinary projects and studies
- Opportunities for personal achievement"

"(The curriculum) needs to promote learning across a wide range of contexts and experiences. It should equip young people with high levels of literacy, numeracy and thinking skills and support development of their health and wellbeing. It should enable every child to develop his or her full potential through a broad range of challenging, well-planned experiences which help them develop qualities of citizenship, enterprise and creativity." (p9)

"The framework should support teachers in planning for both lateral (broadening and enriching) and vertical (becoming more challenging) progression. This means enhancing experiences within levels as well as providing for progression to the next level." (p12)

"We would like to work with schools to explore possibilities for different approaches to personalisation and choice. We wish to consider, for example, whether it would be desirable and possible for choices to take place over a more extended period across S1-S3, rather than the S2 course model. We would like to consider approaches to subject choice which are not based on the current modal structure but still address the needs and interests of young people." (p16)

Levels of Achievement

Level Experiences and outcomes for most children

Early	In pre-school and in Primary 1
First	By end of P4, but earlier for some
Second	By end P7, but earlier for some
Third	In S1-S3, but earlier for some
Fourth	Fourth level equates to SCQF Level 4 General
Senior	In S4-S6, but earlier for some

Building the Curriculum 1 (November 2006)

“Each of the curriculum areas makes its own unique contribution to developing the four capacities of children and young people. It does so both in its own disciplinary context and through connections with other areas of learning. ...curriculum areas are not intended to be rigid structures. There will be considerable scope for innovative approaches to building the curriculum.” (p3)

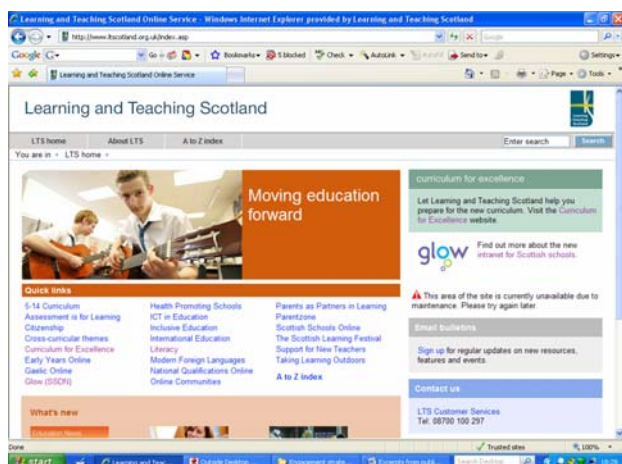
“Learning through **health and wellbeing** promotes confidence, independent thinking and positive attitudes and dispositions. Because of this, it is the responsibility of every teacher to contribute to learning and teaching in this area.” (p10)

“Competence and confidence in **literacy**, including competence in grammar, spelling and the spoken word, is essential for progress in all areas of the curriculum. Because of this, all teachers have responsibility for promoting language and literacy development. Every teacher in each area of the curriculum needs to find opportunities to encourage children and young people to explain their thinking, debate their ideas and read and write at a level which will help them to develop their language skills further.” (p16)

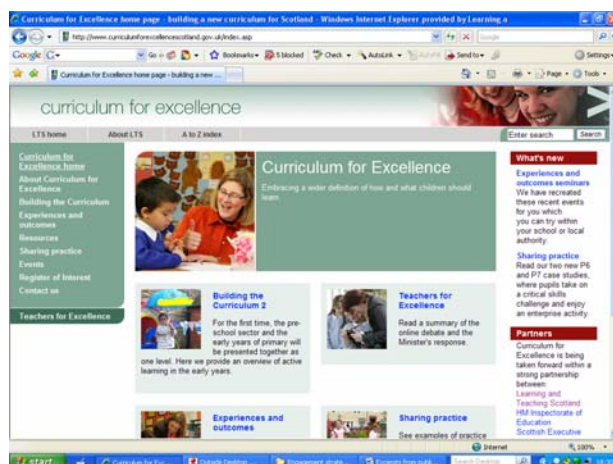
“All teachers have responsibility for promoting the development of **numeracy**. With an increased emphasis upon numeracy for all young people, teachers will need to plan to revisit and consolidate numeracy skills throughout schooling.” (p20)

Building the Curriculum 2 – Active Learning in the Early Years (March 2007)

Whilst the second in the series of Building the Curriculum advice documents looks closely at the **Early** level of Curriculum for Excellence, there is much sound advice given regarding active approaches to learning which are readily applicable for all teachers and all levels of learning 3-18.



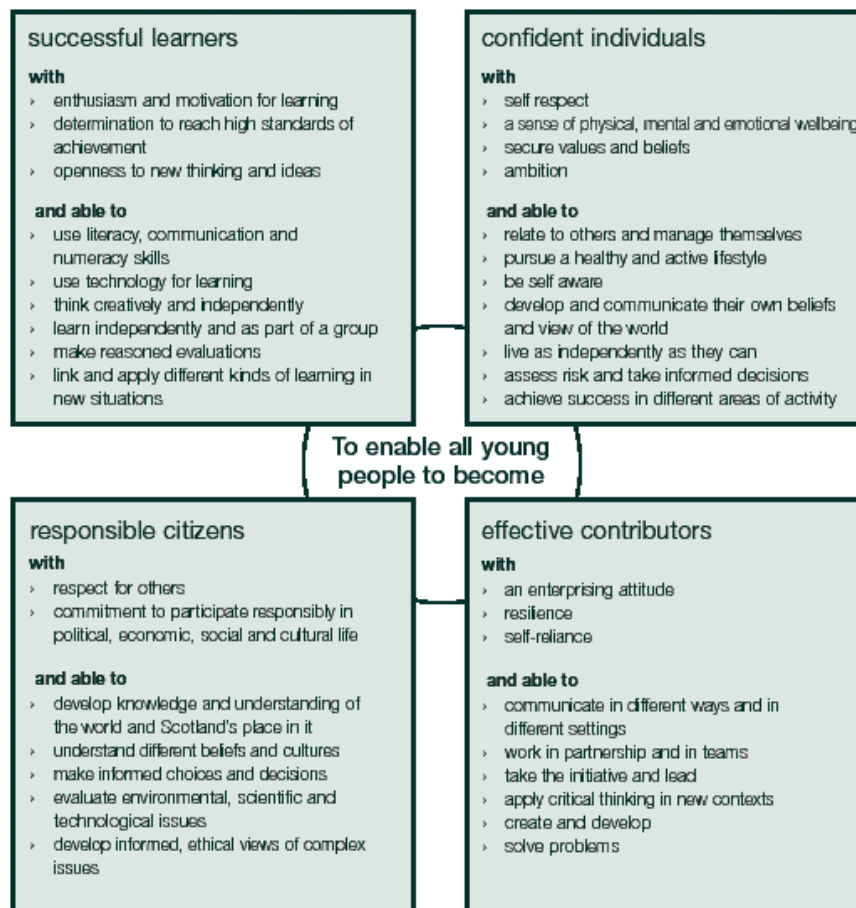
www.LTScotland.org.uk



<http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk>

Purposes of the curriculum from 3 -18

Our aspiration for all children and for every young person is that they should be **successful learners**, **confident individuals**, **responsible citizens** and **effective contributors** to society and at work. By providing structure, support and direction to young people's learning, the curriculum should enable them to develop these four capacities. The curriculum should complement the important contributions of families and communities.



How can schools achieve these purposes?

These purposes represent a very broad range of outcomes, including learning how to learn and the promotion of positive attitudes and attributes. The opportunity for children to develop the four capacities will strongly depend upon:

- the environment for learning
- the choice of teaching and learning approaches
- the ways in which learning is organised

Respectful and constructive relationships are the starting point for successful learning. Schools and other educational settings can foster respect, responsibility and tolerance by living out their values, practising them within their own communities. By having high aspirations for each child, schools are able to support children in developing confidence and ambition.

Teachers and educators have a wide range of approaches to draw upon, and these need to be chosen carefully to support the purpose of learning in each particular case (so, for example, the development of informed views requires learners to engage in a process of constructive challenge and debate).

The learning will take place through a wide range of planned experiences. These will include environmental, scientific, technological, historical, social, economic, political, mathematical and linguistic contexts, the arts, culture and sports. Sometimes the experiences may be linked to particular vocational or other specialised contexts. To achieve this breadth will require both subject-based

studies and activities which span several disciplines. Children will also learn through the day-to-day experiences of the life of the school community, with its values and social contact, and from out-of-school activities, events and celebrations. Taken together, these experiences should provide a motivating and enriching blend.

With support from education authorities and schools, teachers will have the task of providing activities which will enable each learner to develop to their full potential in the four capacities. Much of what is needed already exists, but it also requires clear guiding principles to assist teachers and schools in their practice and as a basis for continuing review, evaluation and improvement. These principles will apply to the curriculum at national, education authority, school and individual levels.

Principles for curriculum design

Challenges and enjoyment

Young people should find their learning challenging, engaging and motivating. The curriculum should encourage high aspirations and ambitions for all. At all stages, learners of all aptitudes and abilities should experience an appropriate level of challenge, to enable each individual to achieve his or her potential. They should be active in their learning and have opportunities to develop and demonstrate their creativity. There should be support to enable young people to sustain their effort.

Breadth

All young people should have opportunities for a broad, suitably-weighted range of experiences. The curriculum should be organised so that they will learn and develop through a variety of contexts within both the classroom and other aspects of school life.

Progression

Young people should experience continuous progression in their learning from 3 to 18 within a single curriculum framework. Each stage should build upon earlier knowledge and achievements. Young people should be able to progress at a rate which meets their needs and aptitudes, and keep options open so that routes are not closed off too early.

Depth

There should be opportunities for young people to develop their full capacity for different types of thinking and learning. As they progress, they should develop and apply increasing intellectual rigour, drawing different strands of learning together and exploring and achieving more advanced levels of understanding.

Personalisation and choice

The curriculum should respond to individual needs and support particular aptitudes and talents. It should give each young person increasing opportunities for exercising responsible personal choice as they move through their school career. Once they have achieved suitable levels of attainment across a wide range of areas of learning the choice should become as open as possible. There should be safeguards to ensure that choices are soundly based and lead to successful outcomes.

Coherence

Taken as a whole, children's learning activities should combine to form a coherent experience. There should be clear links between the different aspects of young people's learning, including opportunities for extended activities which draw different strands of learning together.

Relevance

Young people should understand the purposes of their activities. They should see the value of what they are learning and its relevance to their lives, present and future.

Although all should apply at any one stage, the principles will have different emphases as a young person learns and develops. So, for example, the need for breadth will apply very strongly in the earlier stages, to ensure that a child will gain knowledge and understanding across a wide range of areas of

learning. More options for specialisation will be available later, once essential outcomes have been achieved. The nature of choice will also change as a child develops, for example starting with choices in play activities, moving through choices in topics and contexts for learning and eventually reaching opportunities for decisions between programmes which may have implications for subsequent careers.

There will need to be sufficient flexibility in the way in which teaching and learning is managed to find the right blend and balance for each young person for their particular stage and circumstances. To enhance opportunities and allow greater personalisation of learning, schools will need to look beyond their own expertise and resources so that their students can have access to suitable provision. This may be through technologies to make connections between learners and teachers at a distance, or partnerships with other schools and colleges.

Implications of the values, purposes and principles

Taken together, the values, purposes and principles imply changes and developments which will mean:

for young people:

- higher standards of achievement through a clearer focus on the purposes of learning activities, leading through to broader choices as they progress through school; better progression from one level to the next; assessment which promotes learning and recognises different types of achievements; scope for more enjoyment in learning

for parents:

- a clear understanding of the learning opportunities their children should have, ways in which they can support their children's learning; the purposes of these activities; and the recognition which children will receive for their achievements

for teachers, schools, early years centres and colleges:

- clarity about what education is seeking to achieve for each child; flexibility to apply professional judgement in planning programmes and activities to respond to the needs of individual children; a curriculum which is not overcrowded because of too much content; more teaching across and beyond traditional subject boundaries; time and space for innovative and creative teaching and learning

for employers and providers of higher education:

- better preparation for further study and work through improved skills, greater confidence and improved attitudes to enterprise, work and lifelong learning

for the education system:

- a responsibility to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are directed to achieving the purposes and principles set out here and that qualifications reflect this fully; a responsibility to ensure that initial training and continuing professional development of teachers and educators equip them fully for their task; and a commitment to a continuing programme of refreshment and review of the curriculum

for society:

- confidence that children and young people are being enabled to reach the highest levels of achievement as successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors to society and at work.