

Together We Will Achieve



**Coláiste
Bhaile Chláir**

We are enabling members of our community to become creative, considerate, curious and courageous learners, capable of working independently and in partnership with others.

Learning Together

*When we study together we learn
together, we work together and we
prosper together.*

Together We Will Achieve

Our vision

The core guiding principle that lies at the heart of everything we do at Coláiste Bhaile Chláir is to encourage and develop each member of the school community to achieve personal excellence through empowerment. We believe that this can only be achieved by the entire school community learning together.

We believe in empowering students to take control of their own learning and their own lives, enabling them to make good choices and to have the ability to thrive in an ever-changing world.

It is critical that students develop their capacity to learn, both independently and in collaboration with others, and that they contribute to and benefit from our community.

Our role as educators is to:

- help students develop effective learning habits, which will give them the tools, confidence and flexibility to cope in many different and difficult situations

- nurture students' emotional intelligence - their ability to function effectively in social situations because they not only know and understand how to manage themselves but are also sensitive to the needs of others.

In order to achieve these goals, we have developed six key approaches to learning that are used consistently and creatively across our community and which, collectively, we refer to as Building Learning Capacity.

The following pages describe what we mean by Building Learning Capacity and the learning approaches that underpin it. These approaches will help to maximize every students' achievements supported by parents and teachers.

We aim to create an environment where every student sees their potential by setting high expectations for all and by providing building blocks for their success, we aim for their hopes and aspirations to become a reality.

This booklet is for all of us as we **Learn Together**

6 Key approaches to learning

At Coláiste Bhaile Chláir, we have widely researched and collaborated with other educational institutions and professionals to help us produce a framework for learning.

Our framework enables members of the school community to become creative, curious and courageous learners, capable of working independently and with others. Reflecting the new Junior and Senior Cycle aims, our framework uses **6 key approaches** to build upon their key skill foundations to create strong learning habits, dispositions and attitudes.

Building students' Learning Capacity (not surprisingly) also boosts their exam performance.



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**Building
Learning
Capacity**

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Learning Capacity

Learning is for life, not just for school

Through building learner capacity, we aim to:

- Help our students to **develop both an appetite and an ability to learn** that stays with them not just for the rest of their academic studies but **for the rest of their lives**.
- Enable our students **to respond positively and robustly to whatever challenges life may throw at them**.

We want our students to discover what it is that makes them **Happy** in school, what it is that they would love to be great at. Help them to discover “the joy of the struggle” and the pride and satisfaction that comes from making progress and achieving.

Success lies in students developing *learning habits* which become so ingrained that, instead of giving up or stumbling at the first hurdle, they have the resilience and resourcefulness to approach problems or uncertainty in a calm, confident and creative way. We hope that through ‘**Building Learning Capacity**’ students will have the ability to apply this not only to their studies but to all the challenges they will face in life.

Our whole community – students, staff, parents and board of management – are referenced in **Building Learning Capacity** as it improves student’s ability to manage their emotions, social situations and how they reflect on and learn from their experiences.

What’s the big idea?

Building learning capacity is about...

- Creating a culture not just in the classroom but in the wider school community
- Creating better life chances for young people
- Based on a belief that the habit of learning can be learned
- Helping everyone in our community to take personal responsibility for their lives and learning

Try This...

Teachers and parents: try praising young people for the effort they put in and how they have tried to tackle the problem. Don’t praise them for being smart and getting things right or put them down for getting things wrong.

Teachers and parents: Ask yourself what kind of role model as a learner am I to my students or my son or daughter.

1. Learning Habits



Developing learning habits

At Coláiste Bhaile Chláir we believe one of the keys to becoming a successful learner is to develop good learning habits that, with lots of practice, become second nature. Top learners are in the habit of:

- **Persevering**- they never, never, never give up in the face of difficulties
- **Being curious**- they ask questions and see connections between things
- **Working well with others**- they learn from others and *help* others to learn
- **Reflecting on what they are doing**- they make flexible plans and keep them under review

Our students are given the opportunity to build their strength as learners, not just in classes but in all activities that take place throughout the normal school day. Whether that be through Young Scientist, School Musical, Green Schools, Debating and Public Speaking, Wellness Week, helping in the homework club or on the sports field.

Engaging in these activities helps develop and promote effective learning habits that make students more determined, ambitious, and flexible thinkers, as well as more successful and content in their personal lives.

Once students **become aware of the habits** they have, they can also see **how to improve and make progress in these areas**.

Learning to learn

- Understanding and adopting good *Learning habits* can help us get the best from ourselves
- We all need to learn how to break the habit of depending on others to do things for us
- Our goal should be to take responsibility for ourselves whether we are working independently or in collaboration with others

Try This...

Teachers: try running lessons where all students can get involved in discussions without needing to put their hand up.

Give students the opportunity to create their own learning resources for revision.

Parents: Get your son/daughter to engage with feedback and reflect on their last test or piece of classwork. Ask them, how they could enhance their answer...what strengths they showed...what strategies they used...what their goal is and what they need to do to bridge the gap and achieve that goal.

2.

Coaching



Using coaching to improve performance Helping people to help themselves.

In Coláiste Bhaile Chláir we have achieved much success. We have heard winning captains thank their coaches for their support, guidance and direction, saying it would not be possible without them. This is true, but each athlete just like each student must put the work in. It is with the help of a coach that they work out what is needed to improve and reach their goals, through hard work, application and practice.

In Coláiste Bhaile Chláir we use and value coaching as a method of assuring progress and *building learning power*, not just in our sporting activities but across the curriculum.

Coaching in the curriculum in Coláiste Bhaile Chláir

- We train and encourage all staff, parents and students to adopt coaching techniques and engage in “Learning Conversations” in order to help others to help themselves.
- This happens not only in the classroom but also when students seek support or have to speak to Caomhnóirí, Ceannairí (Year Heads), Deputy Principals, Principal, Counsellors about any concerns or problems they are facing.
- Parents and Guardians are encouraged to have “Learning Conversations” with students after termly reports, and other forms of assessment throughout the school year.

Coaching Opportunities

For teachers:

- Subject department observations and discussion
- Whole school sharing of pedagogy and CPD resources
- In classroom situated modelling of practices
- Collaboration and professional dialogue

Coaching Techniques

- Be passionate, it’s contagious
- Teach skills in parts to help students master the fundamentals.
- Explain the why. It is important students know the reason they’re being asked to practice a skill
- Give praise and effective feedback. Be specific and try to link it to the why above. Praise satisfies a need for attention, recognition and appreciation
- Model what you preach
- Provide students with opportunities to discuss, analyse and reflect

Try This...

Teachers & Parents: encourage students to visualise their goals clearly before helping them to identify the first steps they need to take, on the way to their achievement.

“Work with” your son/daughter or student, don’t “tell them what to do”, ask them what they think they need to do.

3.

Behaviour For Learning



Showing Respect, Taking Responsibility.

Managing behaviour for learning

Fostering an atmosphere in Coláiste Bhaile Chláir where everyone feels respected, safe and happy allows students to learn more successfully. Students are expected to take personal responsibility for their behaviour, to respect other learners and the spaces in which we all work.

In order to develop students' ability to manage their own behaviour, we use restorative approaches to learning – in other words, we help individuals to gain a better understanding of themselves and their emotions, as well as the impact they have on others.

Ultimately the aim is to enable all students to focus on the real reason for attending school: ***making progress in their learning.***

Try This...

Teachers/Parents:

Clarify: What Happened?

Emotionally Connect: What were you thinking then/since?

Focus on Impact of Behaviour: Who could have been affected by what you did and how?

Consider: What could you have done differently?

Take Responsibility/Find Solution: What needs to happen now to make things right?

How we encourage behaviour for learning

In classes students:

- Adopt learning habits that develop social skills, such as listening to and understanding other people's views
- Take personal responsibility for behaviour and attitude to learning as an individual and a contributor to a team
- Help others in the classroom shine and make progress

As a School, we:

- Use restorative approaches to help students understand emotions and improve social interactions
- Use restorative approaches to solve conflict situations through discussion
- Encourage a sense of belonging to our community

These approaches not only create a sense of social harmony and belonging in school, but also improve students' ability to form positive social and personal relationships which will stand them in good stead for the rest of their lives.

We cannot change the world but we can help students develop learning habits that help them better navigate and succeed in it.

4. Growth Mindset



Encouraging a Growth Mindset

Everyone is born with an intense drive to learn. Infants stretch their skills daily and master the most difficult tasks of a lifetime, like learning to walk and talk. They never decide it is too hard or not worth the effort. Babies don't worry about making mistakes or humiliating themselves. They walk, they fall, they get up, they try again. What could put an end to this exuberant learning? The answer is mindsets.

Carol Dweck, world-renowned Professor of Psychology highlights two ways to view our minds:

As fixed: like buckets – with a limited capacity; once they are full, they are full

As growth: like balloons – that can continue to expand and grow

The lifelong impact:

Fixed mindset students:

- Fear failure and view mistakes as weaknesses, something to be ashamed of.
- Avoids new challenges.
- Give up rather than risk highlighting a lack of knowledge or struggle.
- Associate effort with failure, are unlikely to seek feedback or help as it highlights their deficits.

Growth mindset students:

- Expect to make mistakes and understand mistakes can be corrected.
- Enjoy being challenged even if not immediately successful as, they know eventual mastery is achievable.
- Seek out help and feedback to help them achieve mastery.
- They see effort as the path to mastery and persist to achieve it.

Growth Mindset in CBC

We believe everyone's learning capacity has the potential to **expand and grow** like a balloon.

A growth mindset not only leads to exam success, but continues to stretch our most able students and raises the bar for those who are apparently 'less able'.

By providing students with learning opportunities where they can take risks, experiment and learn, they can develop growth mindsets and surprise even themselves with the progress they make.

To encourage this progressive mindset we give feedback that:

- values and praises the effort, commitment and strategies that students use when addressing challenges and problems, and not merely the outcomes they achieve.
- we are **specific** and **realistic** in our feedback.
- we encourage and coach them to work things out for themselves

Try This...

Teachers & Parents:

- Encourage students to take risks, try new things, challenge themselves without fearing mistakes. Promote the mindset that mistakes are opportunities to learn.
- Focus on what areas need development. Focus on the "yet". Say "you're not there yet..." or "you're not at that level yet".
- Praise the effort and strategy not just the outcome. Say things like "you really excelled/ improved. You must have put in a lot of effort".

5. Reflection for Progress



**How do learners know they are making progress?
What does progress look like? How can learners be helped
and encouraged to improve their performance?**

Questions like these led us to develop our assessment coversheet where students reflect on and evaluate their performance and effort. Here they identify their strengths and acknowledge areas for improvement.

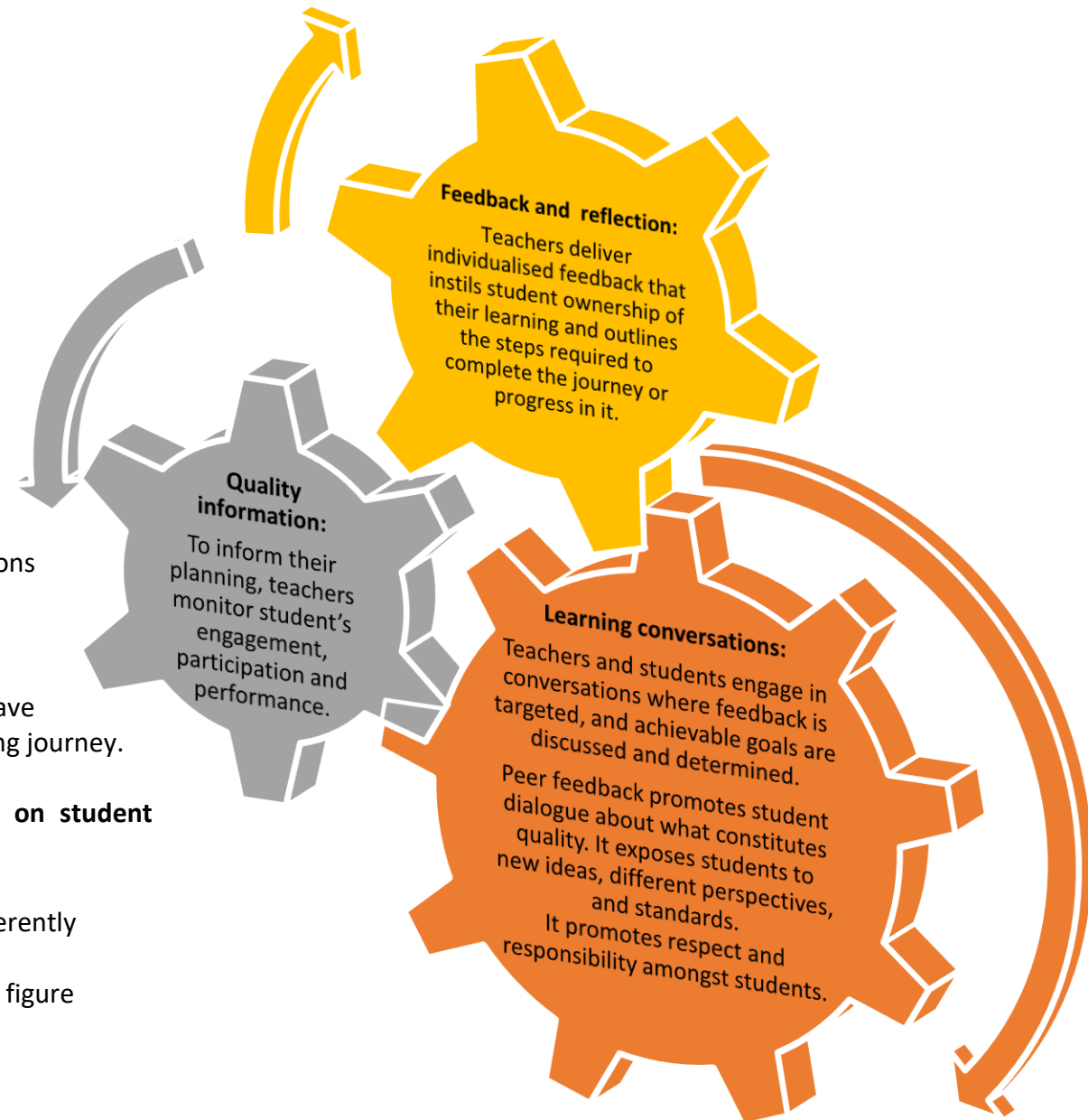
This reflection process encourages students to engage with feedback, supports students in recognising how they their learning is progressing and helps them plan the next steps needed to achieve their learning goals.

Planning for student achievement

- Teachers use formative assessment through observations and questions to identify adjustments that can improve student learning.
- Teachers devise lessons with clear outcomes that guide lesson focus and the selection of appropriate activities.
- Formative assessment helps teachers evaluate what their students have learned and implement strategies to further aid them on their learning journey.

Feedback and reflection are among the most critical influences on student learning.

- Targeted feedback triggers an optimistic response from students.
- Feedback encourages them to keep trying. It outlines what to do differently the next time they attempt a task.
- Reflection provides students with the opportunity to use feedback to figure out the steps needed to achieve success.



6. Student Voice



Shaping our own Future

The wellbeing of young people is enhanced by appropriate experiences of freedom, choice, participation, and decision-making in a supportive environment. Structures, relationships, and democratic participation across the school can encourage all students' participation, allowing them to find and develop their voices and increase their sense of community.

Authentic listening by the school is central to these experiences; this happens when the views and suggestions of young people are sought after, acknowledged, and responded to.

Students are central to everything we do in Coláiste Bhaile Chláir. Giving students a voice helps to develop their self-worth and encourages them to be leaders, offering up ideas and suggestions and taking personal responsibility for shaping learning in our community.

Try This...

Teachers:

- Develop classroom “norms” in conjunction with your class.
- Reflect on and discuss classroom positive environments.
- Ask students to unpack the examples for the behaviours that made the experience positive.
- Use Think-Pair-Share to create a list of positive behaviours that would support a learning environment where everyone feels successful and supported.

Student Voice in CBC

How we encourage student involvement

In the Classroom

- Developing roles in group work for every student
- Encouraging students to feedback to each other using supportive language.
- Asking students what they need to learn about a new topic
- Giving students the opportunity to provide feedback on pedagogy

In the School

- Inviting students to join the Student Council, to become Cairdeas leaders, to become tutors, house captains and/or to join school committees
- Enabling them to help shape the curriculum and environment
- Asking them to take leading roles in organising and running school events

All of the opportunities and activities listed give students a powerful voice that leads to development and change, driven by learners themselves.