

Learnership

Raising the status of learning
from an act to an art in your school

"Marzano and Hattie are about how we teach, Anderson is about how we learn."
Carl Allan, Principal Glen View Primary School, NZ

James Anderson

author of *The Agile Learner*

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James Anderson



‘I have looked long and hard for a great book on how to include the teaching of learning strategies in the classroom – and finally found it. Anderson uses the latest research coupled with a deep classroom understanding of merging thinking and learning WITH the curriculum to empower teachers and students with the optimal strategies for success.’

John Hattie, Melbourne Laureate Professor Emeritus

‘James Anderson has been inspiring educators across NZ through his delivery of workshops on what great teaching and learning looks like ... the information he shares is thought-provoking, relevant, purposeful and inspiring. James challenges teachers to reflect on their practice and think about how they can create effective learning opportunities in their classrooms. A skillful and engaging facilitator, James has thoughtfully shaped the learning experience in each and every one of his workshops.’

Faye Huawai, Learning Network NZ

‘James’s work always focuses on student growth and learning, and opens up ways of thinking for teachers to consider. We appreciate the way he stretches thinking, keeps a student focus and is an ever-evolving, lifelong learner who shares his wisdom with others. James is creative and innovative, a deep thinker, futuristic and data driven. The way he integrates concepts such as Habits of Mind, growth mindset and deliberate practice is just amazing.’

Pat Mullikin, Educational Consultant, Adaptive Schools & Cognitive Coaching Training Associate, Habits of Mind Consultant, Director, Tri-County Teacher Center

Juanita Henry, Educational Consultant, Adaptive Schools & Cognitive Coaching Training Associate, Habits of Mind Consultant, Director, Genesee Region Teacher Center

‘I am thrilled to endorse the exceptional work our school has undertaken in collaboration with James Anderson. His approach to education goes beyond traditional teaching methods, emphasising a profound focus on learning and the process required for learning. James has a remarkable ability to connect content with our staff in a way that is truly exciting, relevant and engaging. Through his innovative strategies, we are successfully transforming our classrooms into dynamic learning environments where students actively participate and flourish. His passion for education is contagious, and he has empowered our teachers to think creatively and foster a love for learning among our students. James Anderson’s contributions have undoubtedly enriched our school community and ignited a passion for lifelong learning. As a result, our school vision is no longer about Being Our Best, rather Bettering our Best!’

Carl Allen, Principal, Glenview Primary School

‘Working with James Anderson has been a transformative journey, focused on the concepts of Learnership, growth mindset and Habits of Mind. A highlight of our collaboration lies in James’s ability to engage and motivate our staff, cultivating a team of dedicated individuals who eagerly embraced their new learning opportunities. Through his unique approach, James has helped us refine our school’s vision, mission and values, fostering a school culture centred on strong morale and shared beliefs. What sets James apart is his exceptional willingness to co-design learning experiences tailored to our staff’s needs, while effectively contextualising them for the entire school, from Prep to Year 6.’

Trish Hollands, Principal, Ipswich Central State School

‘As an educational leader, working with James Anderson has been highly impactful in shaping my understanding of the relationships between teaching and learning as complementary but very different crafts. While teachers obviously have skills that make them good teachers, do students have well-developed skills to be good learners? His guidance to shift our instructional focus from how we teach to prioritise how students learn has enabled us to empower students as accountable stakeholders in their educational journeys. Through our partnership with James, we understand where to put our instructional energy to balance the teaching and learning equation and help our students to grow their agency.’

Jan Stone, Principal, Pinjarra Senior High School

‘I am writing this endorsement with great enthusiasm and pleasure to express my sincere appreciation for the exceptional work and significant impact that James Anderson has had during three years of collaboration with our school. James has played a crucial role in helping me become a better leader. His professional guidance and mentorship have enhanced my understanding of growth mindset principles and equipped me with effective strategies to foster a culture of continuous improvement. Through his empowering approach, we developed a future-focused school community that strives towards excellence.

‘I wholeheartedly endorse James Anderson’s book. His extensive knowledge, dedication, and unique approach to fostering a growth mindset have significantly impacted our school. James’s book will

empower and inspire countless educators and parents, enabling them to create environments that foster a growth mindset and maximise the potential of every learner.'

Elizabeth Amvrazis, Principal, Asquith Girls High School

'Inspirational. This is the most exciting thing in my 30 years of teaching. It's the single thing in my 14 years of being a principal where every single staff member is on the journey and changing the way they think – in order to bring change with our students. It's so, so cool. It's the one thing I think could really make a difference with teenagers in our current culture. And that's saying something!'

Rosey Mabin, Principal, Inglewood School

'We engaged James Anderson as a keynote for a conference that was held online. Right from the start James was professional in his communication with us, and flexible in helping us design a program that allowed the themes of his keynote to flow through the sessions that followed. James's presentation was highly professional, varied and informative. He used great models, props and examples to get his messages and ideas for change and improvement across clearly to teachers. James helped us out through the day in various sessions, providing his own time and expertise to remain part of the entire day, as both participant and leader in education. We really valued James's contribution, including his engaging and natural presentation style, and encourage others to take advantage of James abilities!'

Peter Saffin, CEO, Mathematical Association of Victoria

'James Anderson's keynote at our recent Mathematics conference was engaging, insightful and exceptionally well delivered. His presentation was well paced and was the perfect starting point for the day. James also joined in on some of the workshops that followed, which was very appreciated by participants who were keen to take a deeper dive into his work. His presentation sparked great discussion, and feedback from participants was very positive. I would highly recommend him as a keynote speaker.'

Deb Carmichael, Senior Advisor, Independent Schools Victoria

OTHER BOOKS BY JAMES ANDERSON

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*The Agile Learner: Where Growth Mindset, Habits of Mind
and Practice Unite*

*The Learning Landscape: How to increase Learner Agency
and become a lifelong learner*

*The Mindset Continuum: How to implement Growth Mindsets
and increase Learner Agency*

**Available from www.jamesanderson.com.au and
through online retailers**

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge all the incredible educators I've had the privilege to work with. Those who guided and encouraged me as a beginning teacher. You challenged me to teach students not just to think, but to think well. Those who mentored me and encouraged me. You taught me how to multiply my impact through leadership. And all those that have invited me to work with their school communities over the last 25 years. Your passion for learning and your dedication to raising the aspirations and improving the lives of our youth is a constant source of inspiration and energy for me.

I'd also like to acknowledge the many thought leaders, researchers and academics who have helped shape my thinking over the years. There are too many to name, but several stand out for their keen observation of the human condition and their insights into how we achieve growth. Key among these are Art Costa and Bena Kallick for their work describing the Habits of Mind and understanding what to do, when we don't know what to do. Anders Ericsson for helping me understand the processes behind developing expertise. Carol Dweck for the way she shed light on the importance of understanding our capacity to grow. And Nicholas Taleb for describing what it means to become antifragile and to thrive on disruption. Your 'thought prints' can be found throughout this book.

Writing a book is so much more than putting words on a page. Thank you for the invaluable contribution of my coach, and friend, Andrew Griffiths, who consistently guided and pushed me to be a better author. Thank you also to Michael Hanrahan and the team at Publish Central for helping create the best book possible. This book is so much richer and more valuable than I could have created on my own.

To my daughter Lucy, who is becoming such a strong, capable young woman.

And to my partner in life, Fiona, whose love and support I draw on constantly.

Thank you all.

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www.jamesanderson.com.au
james@jamesanderson.com.au

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Let's begin

Imagine walking around your school and seeing engaged and enthusiastic students and teachers. Everybody is focused on learning and growth. In the classroom, students are engaged. In the staffroom, teachers are excited about their next lesson and are sharing ideas. There's not a complaint to be heard. Parents appreciate the wonderful results and the confident people their children are becoming. Students, teachers and the wider community all understand themselves as learners. It's a place where students are not simply learning, they are becoming skilful lifelong learners.

This is what we all wish every school was like. But we also know it's a rarity.

School leaders know we have a problem. Teachers are under-resourced, overworked and burnt out, while students are not learning or being prepared as well as we'd want them to be for today's rapidly changing world.

For years the solution to just about every educational issue has been to focus on teaching practices. In this environment, students have increasingly sat back and done less and less, becoming passive learners, their classroom performance a function of teaching, rather than their own ability to learn and grow.

As educational leaders we are charged with ensuring students have both the will and power to act in the world and to be confident in their ability to overcome the challenges and adversity that will come their way. In short, for them to have agency in their lives.

In these pages we open a new chapter in education. A chapter that addresses these problems. One that recognises the skill of learning as being at least as important as the skill of teaching, and probably more

so. One that challenges educators to ensure students become masters of *how* they learn, not just *what* they learn. One that recognises Learnership as the *skill of learning*.

For school leaders, *Learnership* provides a pathway for raising student achievement. But it does so much more than that. It shows you how to create a school culture that increases the agency students have in the world, and to raise their aspirations to set them confidently on a path to succeed in school and thrive in life.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

This book is broken up into eight parts, each a step on the journey towards building a true learning community.

In part I we take a brief look at the world we are preparing our students for. A world where the only certainty is uncertainty, and the only constant is change. A world that demands students are not only continuously learning, but also continuously improving.

If we are to build a culture of learning and growth and create true learning communities, every person in the community needs to understand themselves as a learner. So, in part II we explore how we build the foundation of our culture by nurturing a growth mindset. I introduce you to the Mindset Continuum and show you how to 'nudge' your learners, and your culture, towards a more growth-oriented mindset.

We then take a deep dive into Learnership in parts III, IV and V. We begin by defining Learnership, and I then challenge the way you think and talk about learning – to shift the paradigm from learning being something students simply do, to something that can be done well. To transform learning from an act to an art in your school.

And I describe the pinnacle of Learnership: the Agile Learner. This is someone who embraces challenges and cultivates their Habits of Mind in a way that makes them antifragile, essentially futureproofing themselves against challenges and uncertainty.

In parts VI and VII we turn our attention to your school culture and ask, 'How is learning done at your school?' I invite you to assess the environment in your school using my Learnership Diagnostic, which

provides enormous insight into your learning culture and points the way to developing a more growth-oriented system.

Finally, in part VIII, we take a practical look at how to teach for Learnership. I share how to structure your Learnership program in a way that supports and nurtures your culture of learning and growth, creating a true learning community.

Throughout the book you'll find QR codes like this. Scan these codes to watch short videos where I explain each 'nudge' and give short examples of how they might be applied to nudge teaching practice and your school culture. I provide a full explanation of how nudges work in chapter 5.



WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

This book is for principals and senior school leaders, although of course teachers will also find it hugely valuable. It is for senior people in decision-making positions, who are thinking about school-level issues. The school leaders who are concerned about the limited aspirations and opportunities passive and ineffective learners have in life. Leaders who are waking up to the fact that they have been trapped in a teaching and performance culture.

In these pages I provide a clear understanding of what you didn't know was missing: a focus on the skill of learning. I give you a way to recognise it. A way to understand how to develop a culture around it. In doing so, I will help you hit your short-term curriculum outcomes while also prepare students for life after school. A life in a world that is rapidly changing, and increasingly complex.

As leaders, it us up to us to raise the standard of learning, not just the learning outcomes, in our school community. We all need to become better learners. We all need to develop Learnership. Our students, our teachers, our leaders and ourselves.

So please join me as we share this journey of Learnership.



Part I

The need for agency

What is happening in your school today that will benefit students in 20 years' time?

We begin our Learnership journey by briefly exploring the bigger purpose of education. Your job as a school leader is to prepare students for a rapidly changing and increasingly complex and challenging world. Your students must learn how to be the masters of their circumstances, not victims. To be powerful in the face of change, not powerless. In short, you are responsible for developing students who have agency in the world. The question I'd like to begin with is, how well is our current system of education allowing you to do this?

We then look at a system that has become almost obsessed with teaching. In schools we regularly discuss quality teaching, the most effective teaching strategies, and how we can measure the impact of teaching on student learning. But I ask, where is the role of students in their own learning? We have a clear understanding of what skilful teachers do, but do we have the same level of clarity around what skilful learners do?

Chapter 1

How well are we preparing students for their future?

Students must be the masters of their
circumstances, not victims.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP TODAY

I was listening to Karl, a principal in a small secondary school, when he described the challenge of school leadership like this:

I want my students to approach life with an attitude of ‘I’m capable of finding a way’. Otherwise they are stuck with the way they are now. And that’s not good enough. I worry that too many of our young people don’t have the self-belief to get them beyond how they view the world today.

I want to raise their aspirations and improve outcomes for all my students, so they can thrive at school and in life after school.

I want to create a school culture – the way we do business around here – that will get maximum growth for young people, and my teachers. Put them on a path that sets them up to succeed in school and thrive in life.

Like so many of the school leaders I work with, Karl has a deep social conscience. He wants to make a *real* difference to the lives of his students, so they can create a better world for themselves and others. He's trying to establish a school culture that sets students up for life *after* school, not just the life *of* school.

I hear that idea repeated over and over.

Carl, a primary school principal, described how he worried his students weren't extending themselves. On paper the school did well, but he felt he should have a higher percentage of students who were exceeding expectations, not just meeting them. His students were not in the habit of pushing themselves. Too many of them were content to sit back and wait for school, and life, to happen to them. Passive learners who coast through, doing 'well enough'.

Elizabeth, frustrated with how the system and the community values education, told me she had stopped paying much attention to her students' year 12 results. Many of them were receiving university offers before they even sat their exams. She told me: 'The system itself is limiting students' aspirations and ability to achieve in life ... The real measure of school achievement is not what students achieve in one year, it's how they are succeeding in 20 years!'

Jan, another principal, commented that the system has trapped teachers into focusing on short-term goals. It's a system that places all the responsibility on teachers to achieve outcomes. In fact, she felt her teachers were so focused on short-term outcomes, they'd either lost sight of their long-term goals or simply didn't have the space to address them. She wanted her teachers, her community and the culture she created to recognise that school is about more than content delivery and standards. It's about preparing students for the future.

Deb, another leader, echoed this frustration with the system's narrow focus on what students are learning. She said: 'We need to shift away from what we *teach*, to how people *learn*. What's going to matter to these kids is not simply what they have learned at school, but that they know how to learn. We rarely teach that, and never measure it. But it's the most important part.'

A future that will be very different

All these leaders are concerned about preparing students well for the future they will be living in, which has always been what education should really be about. The challenge they are recognising is that the current system wasn't designed for the future today's students will have. It's a future that will be very different from the one envisioned when we left school, and unrecognisable compared to the one our parents imagined when they were at school.

Perhaps there was a time when schools could teach students everything they needed to know and then send them off fully prepared for the future. But that's certainly not now. Our youth are growing up in a world that's more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) than ever. Not only is this generation facing more change, the complexity of the changes they face means those challenges will be more difficult to overcome. It's not just a matter of needing to consume more knowledge; they'll need to be better learners too.

A generation ago, teachers could expect that what they taught their students would last them a lifetime. Today, according to Richard Riley, former US Secretary of Education (1993–2001), we are 'preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist, using technologies that haven't been invented, in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet'. Our short-term curriculum outcomes that drive most of the learning in our schools are simply no longer enough.

Even the very idea of having a job, something most of us grew up taking for granted, is disappearing. In 2020 Ravi Venkatesan, Special Representative for Young People and Innovation at UNICEF, noted that there is 'no such thing as a secure job anymore. And more and more, the idea of jobs and careers feels like an artifact of the last century ... our lives are looking like a series of projects.'

So, if our short-term educational outcomes – which are still important – aren't enough to prepare students for this type of world, what is? It's all very well to say we want to raise the aspirations of students and prepare them to thrive, not just survive, in the future we know they are headed for, but what does that *actually mean*?

If we use Elizabeth's measure of success as being what our students are doing in 20 years, what would that look like? Or conversely, if we fail to prepare them well for this future, what might that look like?

THE NEED FOR AGENCY

When we dig a little deeper, the idea all these school leaders (and for that matter, parents as well) are grappling with is **agency**. What we want more than good grades, more than specific content outcomes, more than any of the short-term results our system measures and values, is for our students to have agency in their lives.

'Agency' is starting to become a buzzword – one of those words people casually drop into discussions with an air of 'everyone should already know all about it'. But it's a very deep and very important idea that philosophers and others have been debating for centuries. At its heart it asks: to what extent are we in control of our lives, and to what extent are we controlled by events? To what extent are individuals able to exercise free will? This deserves much greater attention than is currently being paid to it in some circles.

The concept of agency is at the heart of what it is to lead a rich, fulfilling and meaningful life, and to be able to go out in the world and make a difference.

To understand agency, it's easier begin with what it's *not*. Someone *without* agency feels like the world happens to them. They are powerless in the face of adversity. When challenge and difficulty come along, they become the victim of their circumstances, unable to respond effectively.

“What we want more than good grades, more than specific content outcomes, more than any of the short-term results our system measures and values, is for our students to have agency in their lives.

What we fear is that our students will lack agency in their lives.

On the other hand, someone *with* agency is the master of their circumstances. The world still happens to them but they can respond effectively. They are powerful, not powerless, in the face of challenge and adversity. People with agency can shape and control their future. They become the masters of their circumstances. They become the person they want, or need, to be. Is this a fair, if broad, description of the type of life you'd like your students to be living in 20 years?

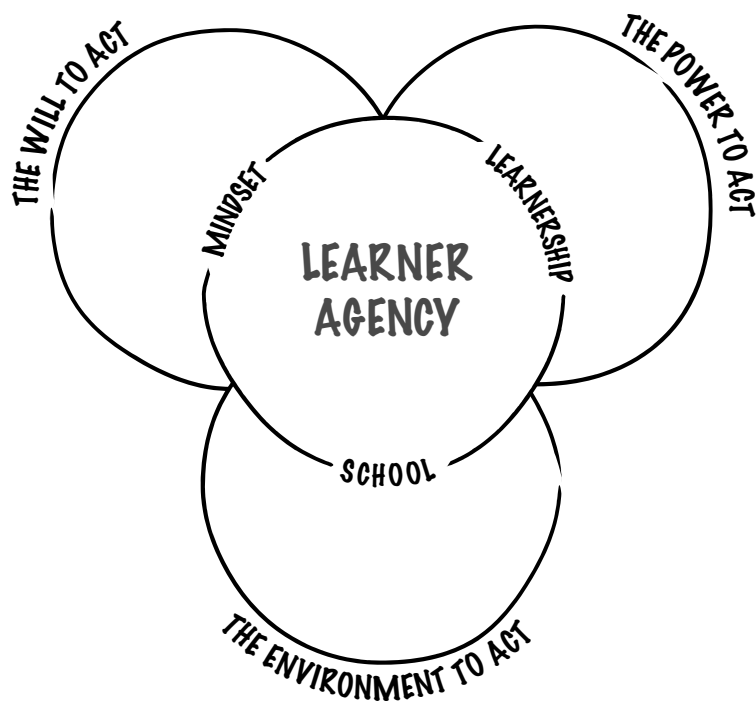
Our current focus on resiliency is a response to the number of students who feel they are acted upon by the world, and they cannot cope with the challenges and adversity they regularly face. Our concern for some students' low aspirations is based on them not believing they can act in a way that makes them powerful. Our desire to see students take advantage of opportunities in the world is the desire that they will become the masters of their circumstances.

Defining 'learner agency'

In recognition of the challenges of the world our students will be living in, the term 'learner agency' is increasingly finding its way into high-level educational policy documents around the world, such as those from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Harvard University's Achievement Gap Initiative, the International Baccalaureate Organisation, the Victorian Department of Education and the New Zealand Ministry of Education.

As is the way when these ideas begin to filter into systems, everyone talks about the same broad ideas but comes up with their own, slightly different, definition. I've draw on the research around learner agency, and define it like this:

Learner agency is the degree to which a person can take initiative and meaningfully influence their world, particularly in the face of challenges. It involves three interrelated and equally important elements: the environment to act, the will to act, and the power to act.

The three elements of learner agency

Let's break that definition down to see how it connects to our core work of preparing students for the future.

To begin with, agency happens by degrees. The question is not whether you have agency or not; it is how much agency you have. The qualities we are going to discuss throughout this book increase the agency students will have, making them increasingly powerful and increasingly able to act on the world.

Agency is about acting meaningfully. It's about having choice over the path you take in life. It's not about trivial things. It's about important things. Being able to make a meaningful difference in your life and the lives of others. Too many of the learner agency initiatives seen in school today focus on trivial choices.

The environment to act

Agency involves being in an environment to act. This is not simply the world at large, which we all experience. It's an environment rich in the challenges that are necessary to drive growth. In the context of our work in schools, it is our school and classroom environment that must challenge students and drive their growth.

Arguably, the rate of change and level of challenge in the world today means there is more opportunity for growth than there has ever been. But as the school leaders above pointed out, circumstance on its own is not enough. Our schools can provide challenging opportunities, but students must also *want* to act on that opportunity. They must have the will to act.

The will to act

Challenges can present themselves in one of two ways:

- Sometimes challenges arise and you have a choice to take them or leave them. The only consequence of choosing to let something pass you by is the lost opportunity to achieve. The choice here is *if you will* act. We refer to this as an **opportunity**.
- Then there are challenges, such as the Covid pandemic, where there is no avoiding it. The world happens to you. The issue here is not *if you will* act. The issue is *if you can* act. We refer to this as **adversity**.

We would hope our students choose to act when unavoidable circumstances arise. Even when you are forced to act, like during the pandemic, skilful learners will embrace the challenge as a once-in-a-lifetime learning opportunity. But not all people choose to act.

Why would students choose not to act on an opportunity? For some, it is one they are not interested in. It represents a direction they are *choosing* not to take. This is an exercise of free will. In many cases, that's a perfectly reasonable choice to make.

But the actual issue here is not that some students choose not to act. Rather, it is that some students, when confronted with an opportunity, don't think they *have the choice* to act.

Many students carry with them self-limiting beliefs that they aren't the 'right type of person' to take advantage of a particular opportunity. They aren't smart enough, or they are not musical, or they are only good at languages but not maths. The belief that their basic characteristics – such as their talents, abilities and intelligence – are unchangeable is what Stanford Professor Carol Dweck calls a 'fixed mindset'.

A fixed mindset limits a student's will to act, not because they are choosing not to act but because they believe they are incapable of acting. This belief limits their ability to exercise their free will.

Not taking advantage of an opportunity is one thing. The opportunity is missed. But what about when adversity comes along? For someone with a fixed mindset, when adversity comes along, they look inside themselves, asking if they have the abilities to deal with the adversity. If the answer is no, they see no way of developing those abilities. They become the victim of their circumstances.

We want students to have choices in life and exercise their free will. Students won't always make the decisions we would hope they would, but there is a big difference between not doing something because you don't want to and not doing something because you don't believe you can.

“... there is a big difference between not doing something because you don't want to and not doing something because you don't believe you can.

The foundation of the learning community you will create is a growth mindset. It is the understanding that we are capable of growth. Developing a growth mindset allows a learner to see more and more opportunities where previously they thought none existed. And it gives them the understanding that, although the world might happen to them at that moment, they can become the person who can act under such

circumstances. The more growth-oriented we become, the more agency we have in the world.

The power to act

Then there is the power to act. Being in the environment that challenges you to act is one thing. Having the desire and belief in your ability to succeed at that challenge and act is another. But developing the power to act, and actually succeeding at that challenge or overcoming that adversity – that is something else again.

As I said above, agency comes in degrees, and it relates to the important things in life, not the trivial. All of us have agency over the easy things in life. In chapter 9, we'll examine 'above and below the bar' challenges. Challenges that are below the bar are within our current abilities – they are 'easy things we haven't done yet'. These are things *we already have agency over*, even though we may never have encountered them before.

It is things we encounter in life that are beyond our current abilities, both challenges and adversity, that we are interested in gaining agency over. To gain agency over things beyond our current abilities we need to change ourselves. To become someone with the necessary abilities. Agency is not something to be given. It's something learners must develop.

To increase agency the learner has to change – not just their environment. They have to understand their capacity to grow, removing any self-limiting beliefs. This is what a growth mindset is all about. And they must increase their abilities, their capacity to act on the world.

This is what Learnership is all about.

Chapter 2

We don't have a teaching problem, we have a learning problem

‘Learning is not the product of teaching.
Learning is the product of the activity of learners.’

~ John Holt

A CULTURE OF TEACHING, NOT LEARNING

Something odd has been happening in education over the past 10 to 15 years. Take a look around and you'll notice we have created a culture based on the skill of teaching.

The evidence is all around us. Teachers, and the idea of quality teaching, are at the centre of almost everything we do. Take a walk around most schools, look at where the professional learning budget is being spent, listen to the conversations in the staffroom – schools have become more about teaching than they are about learning.

Take a moment to reflect on the language used in schools today. Internationally renowned learning expert John Hattie talks about the learning ‘dose’ teachers provide, and how they must adjust the dose to achieve the desired results. He also talks about teachers as ‘activators of learning’.

If a teacher is not present to activate learning, can learning not occur?

The metaphors we use so often convey the idea that teachers act on students. We measure the *impact* of teaching *on* students. This is echoed in Hattie's famous statement for teachers to 'know thy impact'. In my home state of Victoria, the Department of Education has created a list of High Impact Teaching Strategies and proudly uses the acronym HITS. The model is based on the belief that a teacher's efforts cause learning to happen.

Learners have become the passive recipients of teaching.

Consider the role description of the Teaching and Learning Leader. This is undoubtedly one of the most important roles in your school. Chances are the position description has two key components:

- ensuring teachers are engaging in high-quality teaching strategies
- measuring the impact teachers have on learning by gathering data on student achievement.

Implicit in this description is the idea that *learning* is the outcome of *teaching*.

But where is the role of the learner in their own learning? How is that being valued, measured and improved?

Or consider how your professional learning budget has been invested over the past 15 years. If you're like most schools, you have spent much of it on teacher action, identifying the most effective teaching strategies (those with an effect size above 0.4) and how to use data on student performance to improve teacher practice.

We've invested enormous amounts in quality teaching.

Where is the investment in quality learning?

We have a system where teachers teach. When that is done well, student learning outcomes are achieved. The responsibility for achieving better learning outcomes is placed on teachers, which places enormous pressure on them and, at times, lays unfair blame at their feet when learning goals are not met.

At what point do students share responsibility for their role in their own learning?

You probably remember the traditional parent–teacher interviews. When parents and teachers met, it was simply assumed that the teacher was doing their job well. Parents and teachers would sit down and the teacher would explain what the student needed to do to improve their results. Now the roles have reversed. Parents come in questioning why their child isn’t doing well and demanding to know what the teacher is doing about it.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers capture this idea in their statement ‘... there is a broad consensus that teacher quality is the single most important in-school factor influencing student achievement’. The dominant paradigm is that teachers act on students to achieve learning outcomes, and so to achieve better outcomes we need better teaching.

But where do we address the role of the learner in their own learning?

Please don’t misunderstand me. I want quality teaching in schools. I want teachers who understand their role in the classroom. Teachers who can measure their impact and adopt the most effective strategies for improving student learning outcomes. Hattie’s work, as well as the work of many others, has made an enormously valuable contribution to our understanding of what constitutes quality teaching practice. But quality teaching alone is not enough.

“This is where we have gone fundamentally wrong in education over the past 15 years. We’ve forgotten, or at least minimised, the role of the learner in their own learning.

International education adviser Sir Ken Robertson saw it this way: ‘Whether teaching is a delivery system, or an art form, it still treats students as receivers, the part of the system that is being acted on.’ This is where we have gone fundamentally wrong in education over the past 15 years. We’ve forgotten, or at least minimised, the role of the learner in their own learning. Our focus on teacher quality is valid and

important – but it's only part of the story. Learners must, and do, play a critical role in their own learning. We have lost focus on how students engage in the process.

We have lost focus on learning.

LEARNING IS NOT THE PRODUCT OF TEACHING

I am constantly reminded of the words of American author, educator and founder of the unschooling movement, John Holt, who said: 'Learning is not the product of teaching. Learning is the product of the activity of learners.'

Take a moment to read that again. Let it sink in. *Learning is not the product of teaching. It is the product of the activity of learners.*

For years, we've been told learning is the product of teaching. It's what we measure. We adopt a new pedagogy, and we measure the impact on student learning outcomes. Teachers are the part of the variable in the equation that matters. But are they the *only* variable in the equation that matters?

Holt's words are absolutely true. Learning is not the product of teaching. You can be the best teacher in the world. You can set appropriately challenging tasks. You can provide timely, actionable and constructive feedback. You can adopt all the most effective teaching strategies. But if the student chooses to avoid that challenge, if they refuse to listen to the feedback, if they choose not to participate in the learning process, no learning occurs and no learning outcomes are achieved.

I often ask teachers about how students are behaving in their classroom. Over and over, I hear stories about students who opt for easy tasks rather than challenging ones. Students who engage in avoidance activities. Students who are discouraged by mistakes. Students who don't listen to, or won't act on, feedback. I hear stories of students who are stubbornly unmotivated, not simply uninterested in learning but actively resistant to it (an issue we explore in part II: Mindset is the foundation for Learnership).

I invite you to spend some time in your own classrooms. Ask the teachers you lead about their observations of how students are engaging

in the learning process. I guarantee you'll hear the term 'passive learners'. These are learners who have picked up on the culture we've created that's centred on the importance of teaching, and are now sitting back, waiting for learning to happen to them.

A LEARNING PROBLEM

Clearly, how students engage in the learning process is important. However, that's not the message we've been hearing. The very loud and clear message in schools today is that teachers make the difference. It's what teachers do in the classroom that matters most.

So it might surprise you to learn that in his 2003 paper 'Teachers Make a Difference: What is the research evidence?', John Hattie wrote:

Students account for about 50% of the variance of achievement. It is what students bring to the table that predicts achievement more than any other variable.

Fifty percent of the variation in performance between one student and the next comes down to what students do. How the student engages in the learning process. Some students engage very effectively in the learning process, while others are less effective. And this is the single biggest variable in student performance.

When students account for so much of the variance in performance, why aren't we focusing more on how students contribute to their own learning? Why aren't we teaching students how to improve how they contribute to their own learning? Hattie's mantra is: *'It's through teaching the learning strategies, that students make progress, to higher achievement – in that order'*. But this has been largely misunderstood. For the most part we've focused on the teaching strategies, not the learning strategies.

Why do we treat teachers as a controllable variable in learning but not students? Especially when even the most casual observation of student behaviours in the classroom, like those described above, would suggest that these behaviours are *choices* students are making, or skillsets they haven't developed, and not fixed qualities. Surely we can teach in a way so students can engage more effectively in the learning process.

In *Visible Learning for Teachers* (2012), Hattie continued to acknowledge the role of the learner, and the need to teach them learning strategies. He wrote:

When students invoke learning rather than performance strategies, accept rather than discount feedback, set benchmarks for difficult rather than easy goals, compare their achievements to subject criteria rather than with that of other students, develop high rather than low efficacy to learning, and effect self-regulation and personal control rather than learned helplessness in the academic situation, then they are much more likely to realise achievement gains and invest in learning. These dispositions can be taught; they can be learned.

What all of this tells us is that despite what the media might want to portray, we do not have a teaching problem in our schools. We understand what quality teaching looks like, and teachers are working hard at meeting those standards.

What we have is a learning problem.

This is largely what this book is about: getting students to engage more effectively in the learning process and become better learners. What Hattie (and others) has done for quality teaching, I do for quality learning: I define what quality learning looks like, and I outline a process for developing students as more skilful learners, developing what I call ‘Learnership’ – the skill of learning.

“... it’s time to think of what goes on in classrooms like a partner dance or couples figure skating, with the skills of both the teacher and the student contributing equally to the overall performance.

If, as Sir Ken Robertson said, teaching is an art, surely it’s time to think of what goes on in classrooms like a partner dance or couples figure skating, with the skills of both the teacher and the student

contributing equally to the overall performance. At the moment what we have is the teacher taking centre stage, dancing skilfully. Demonstrating their expertise – while many of our students are led along, stumbling, or sitting on the sidelines watching the teacher at work.

Imagine a classroom where teaching and learning are both done ... *beautifully*. Like figure skaters Torvill and Dean's legendary 'Bolero' performance at the 1984 Winter Olympics. Both contributing equally and skilfully to produce an extraordinary performance that neither one could accomplish on their own.

Our recent past in education has been focused on raising the status of teaching. I love the way educational researcher Robert Marzano and others talk about the 'art and science' of teaching. Understanding and documenting what expert teachers do has been valuable. We have developed a clear, helpful guide to the art of teaching. Now we need to do the same for learning.

“... raise the status of learning from an act to an art.

I'd like to see schools raise the status of learning from an act to an art, to become places where we recognise and develop the skill of learning just as much as the skill of teaching. Places where we recognise the intimate relationship – the dance – between the teacher and the learner in achieving growth.

If our goal is to improve student learning outcomes as our system calls for, we will get the best results when we recognise the role of both the teacher and the learner in achieving learning outcomes.

We can represent this as follows:

THE LEARNING EQUATION

Growth = Skilful teaching x Skilful learning

We get maximum growth when skilful teaching is partnered with skilful learning.

THE CLASH OF SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES AND LONG-TERM GOALS

Focusing on the skill of learning alongside the skill of teaching allows us to achieve two important outcomes. It allows us to reach our short-term outcomes that are so valued by our education system, and it helps us better prepare students for the world after school.

Hattie argues that the starting point when determining what to teach should be the curriculum. When we start with our curriculum outcomes, success is nearly always measured by the achievement of those outcomes – which are important. These are the outcomes being measured by our teaching and learning leaders, reported in the media, celebrated in our schools and placed on the ‘data walls’ in our staffroom.

However, I’d argue that these outcomes, alone, are short sighted. Let’s not lose track of what we are trying to achieve, and the reason you became a school leader. We want to do more than achieve curriculum outcomes – we have loftier long-term goals for our learners. We want to prepare students to thrive in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world. We want students who have agency. Our measures of success go well beyond the curriculum goals achieved at the end of a unit of work. We are interested in what our learners are doing 20 years after they leave school. Focusing on our short-term curriculum outcomes alone won’t achieve our long-term goals.

In chapter 7 I tell the story of a skilled teacher who, steeped in a culture of teaching and armed with many of the ‘best’ teaching strategies, achieves extraordinary short-term outcomes by essentially doing all the hard work of learning for her students. With the teacher in charge of learning, short-term learning outcomes are achieved. By the measures of the system the students are doing well.

But while these students were *learning*, they didn’t become *learners*. They may have excelled at the short-term measures but were unprepared

for life after school. This is just one example of how our focus on short-term learning outcomes can get in the way of our long-range educational goals.

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

About now I can almost hear your thoughts: *But that's what we must do! We have to teach the curriculum. We have to report against these short-term outcomes. I can't abandon them.*

No-one is suggesting we abandon those short-term outcomes. In fact, I argue that we can exceed our short-term outcomes on the way to achieving our long-term goals. You can have the best of both worlds.

Learners who engage in the learning process more skilfully achieve more from every learning situation. Teachers who focus on developing more skilful learners are given their energy back and can focus on engaging in more productive pedagogy. Schools that create a culture of learning and growth develop students who not only do well in school but also thrive in the world after school.

“ I argue that we can exceed our short-term outcomes on the way to achieving our long-term goals. You can have the best of both worlds.

This book is premised on the belief that learning is a skill. When schools value and develop that skill students not only achieve (and likely exceed) our traditional short-term educational outcomes, they are also better prepared to thrive and have agency in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world.

To do this, and create a culture of growth and learning, students must first understand themselves as learners. They must develop a growth mindset. That's what we explore in part II.

PART I KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The world our learners will be living in is characterised by rapid change and increasing challenges.
- To thrive in this world, our learners will need to develop **agency** to become the master of their circumstances and powerful in the face of change.
- Agency has three interrelated and equally important parts: the **environment** to act (school). The **will** to act (mindset). The **power** to act (Learnership).
- Skilful teaching is important, but on its own is not enough.
- Learning is not the product of teaching. It is the product of the activity of learners. Therefore it is how students engage in the learning process that is of critical importance.
- The Learning Equation: Growth = Skilful teaching x Skilful learning.
- We have an understanding of quality teaching. What we lack is an understanding of what quality learning looks like.

Use the space below to add some of your own part I key takeaways.

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DISCUSSION AND ACTION

- With your leadership team, discuss your aspirations for your students after they leave school. How much do these resemble the definition of learner agency we've explored?
- Download the 'Learner Agency: a Guide for School Leaders' and distribute it to your leadership team.
- Reflect on John Holt's quote 'Learning is not the product of teaching. Learning is the product of the activity of learners' with your leadership group. What do you notice about the activity of your learners in your school that might be inhibiting their learning?



Use the space below to add some of your own discussion and action items.

[illegible]

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

As we prepare our youth for this challenging and changing world we must create a learning community that guides them to become skilful learners. But before they can do that, students must first understand themselves as learners – people who can create the abilities they want or need in the face of challenges and adversity. For this to happen, we must create an environment that nurtures a growth mindset.

Chapter 14

The Learnership Matrix

The Learnership Matrix: describing skilful learning.

By now you're probably wanting to know, what are the different levels of Learnership? What does it actually look like to be a skilful learner? I've developed the Learnership Matrix (over the page) to answer these questions.

HOW TO NAVIGATE THE LEARNERSHIP MATRIX

Let's begin by taking a moment to learn how to navigate the Learnership Matrix, and recognise its key elements and some basic characteristics of learners at each level. Once we have our bearings, we'll take a deep dive into each of the six levels in the next few chapters.

Across the top of the matrix are the five elements of Learnership we have just explored. Challenge is listed first, because in many ways it is what drives learning. It provides the stimulus for growth. The other elements relate to how we respond to challenge and achieve growth.

The vertical axis lists the six levels of Learnership. Each level is distinctive and represents an increasingly effective way of engaging in

The Learnership Matrix

	 CHALLENGE	 HABITS OF MIND	 MISTAKES	 FEEDBACK	 TIME & ENERGY
AGILE LEARNER	EMBRACES	CULTIVATES	DESIGNS	TAILORS	GROWING
INDEPENDENT LEARNER	TARGETS	DEVELOPS	USES	REQUESTS	STRIVING
DIRECTED LEARNER	ATTEMPTS	EXTENDS	CORRECTS	RESPONDS	PRODUCING
PERFORMANCE LEARNER	LIMITS	APPLIES	AVOIDS	SELECTS	PERFORMING
BEGINNING LEARNER	REDUCES	DESCRIBES	RECOGNISES	ACKNOWLEDGES	DOING
NON-LEARNER	AVOIDS	IGNORANT	IGNORES	DISREGARDS	WASTES

the learning process, and a maturing relationship with each element of Learnership. Importantly, each level also represents a greater level of agency in the world.

In the middle of the Learnership Matrix is a line that divides the matrix in two. This line loosely represents the performance plateau, or ‘the bar’ that we discussed in chapter 9. There are three ‘above the bar’ levels of Learnership, and three ‘below the bar’ levels of Learnership.

The key difference between above-the-bar learners and below-the-bar learners is their relationship with their learning zone. As we will see, below-the-bar learners don’t have a productive relationship with their learning zone. Above-the-bar learners have progressively more mature and productive relationships with their learning zone.

Starting from the bottom of the matrix we see Non-Learners. This is our baseline. At this level of Learnership students essentially aren’t engaging in the learning process at all. The way they avoid challenges robs them of the opportunity to grow. Students with this level of Learnership tend to opt out of learning altogether.

At the level of Beginning Learner we see students who run to their comfort zone. They participate in class, but always want the easiest tasks. These students see learning more as a series of activities to be completed rather than a process of growth. They get busy at the expense of getting better.

At the level of Performance Learners we see students who love their performance zone. If you’ve ever known a student who is more likely to put up their hand with answers (they know) rather than with questions about things they don’t know, they are likely to be at this level of Learnership. They love the safety, certainty and the recognition that comes from being in their performance zone. These are the learners who do their best at the expense of not doing better.

Continuing our journey up the matrix and going above the bar for the first time, we find Directed Learners. These learners require a teacher to guide their learning. In many ways this is the level of Learnership our system is designed for. The quality of learning is a direct result of the quality of teaching. At this level of Learnership, learners are responsive,

in the sense that they respond to the teacher's instructions. They are *learning*, but they are not *learners*.

Independent Learners set their own challenges and take charge of the learning process to achieve their goals. These learners are reactive. They react to the challenges they encounter on the way to achieving their goals. They are learners in the sense they are in charge of their learning, independent of a teacher. However, in the absence of their challenges and goals, they stop growing. They are learners, but they are not continuous learners.

“As we progress up the Learnership Matrix we see steadily improving outcomes. Learners are getting better at getting better. It's not simply the skillset they bring to learning that is improving, it's their relationship with learning that is improving.

Agile Learners are proactive. They are focused on achieving growth, not simply on achieving *goals*. They leverage the challenges that exist in the world around them to achieve continuous growth. This approach proactively prepares them for future challenges. They become futureproofed.

As we progress up the Learnership Matrix we see steadily improving outcomes. Learners are getting better at getting better. It's not simply the skillset they bring to learning that is improving, it's their relationship with learning that is improving. As we'll explore in a moment, with this development comes an increasing degree of agency in the world.

LEVELS, NOT CATEGORIES

It's very natural, and useful, to create an avatar for each level of Learnership. This might be an imaginary student you use to represent

each level of Learnership, or it might be a student you know who seems to fit a particular level of Learnership. The avatar serves as a reference point, a cognitive anchor for the ideas associated with each level.

Don't let the avatar you create trick you into categorising students as *being* a type of learner. Our goal is to help students become increasingly skilful learners. Over time, we want to improve how students engage in the learning process, not categorise them.

In part II we saw how it was useful to understand mindset from the perspective of fixed and growth. But to change mindset we had to think of it as a journey along a continuum. The same is true for Learnership. The matrix divides Learnership into six recognisable levels. This helps us understand Learnership. But improving Learnership is a continuous journey.

Students don't jump from one level of Learnership to the next. At any particular time, students will demonstrate behaviours at several levels of Learnership, with varying frequency. As they become more skilful learners, they will engage in the behaviours associated with the next level more and more frequently. As we'll explore in the next part, we measure Learnership in the school by measuring the frequency of behaviours associated with each level.

As you move through this section and become increasingly familiar with the levels of Learnership, you'll find you start thinking about your students differently. You'll walk past classrooms and see students' learning behaviours in a new light. The way teachers talk about students will carry new meaning and new insights. You'll ask questions that hadn't occurred to you before. As you build these new understandings, you'll find it useful to have a copy of the matrix close at hand.

You can download a copy of the matrix to pin on the notice board in your office or keep a copy on your phone or tablet using the QR code. Annotate it with your reflections. Feel free to distribute copies to your leadership team, but I suggest you hold off distributing it to your entire staff until after you've read the rest of the book.



Now that you have a sense of how to navigate the Learnership Matrix, let's take a more in-depth look at each level. As you explore each level, I invite you to reflect on how you, your students and your teachers engage in learning. Annotate the coming pages with your own examples drawn from observations of your own school and classrooms. Make note of how frequently you see behaviours associated with each level of Learnership. Try to identify the level of Learnership that best describes how members of your school community currently engage in the learning process.

We don't have a teaching problem in our schools, we have a learning problem.

Today, we understand quality teaching better than ever. We have skilful teachers doing a great job in our classrooms. But when we have quality teaching and are still not achieving the results we're looking for, it's a sign that we don't have a teaching problem. What we have is a learning problem.

Ultimately, learning is not the product of teaching, it's the product of the activity of learners. Too many of our students are passive learners who avoid challenges, fail to act on feedback, or who waste effort instead of investing in it. To prepare students to not only succeed in school but also to have the agency they need to succeed in life, we must lead them to become skilful learners.

In his fifth book, James Anderson unveils the concept of 'Learnership', which transforms learning from an act to an art. Within these pages you will learn how to:

- evaluate the current level of Learnership in your school using the Learnership Diagnostic tool
- foster a culture of growth that sets students up for success in both school and life
- apply the Mindset Continuum to nurture a growth mindset in your students
- harness deep insights into the pivotal role of challenges, Habits of Mind, mistakes, feedback and effort in cultivating Learnership
- develop more skilful learners in your classroom
- get your teachers on board and skilled in developing Learnership
- drive a Learnership program in your school.

If you are ready to show your learners how to get more out of every learning situation and get better at getting better, it's time to embrace Learnership.



James Anderson (CSP) is an Australian-based international speaker, author and educator who is passionate about helping everybody become better learners. Originally a teacher and school leader, for the past 20 years James has been working with schools to make classrooms more thoughtful places. His previous

books are *Succeeding with Habits of Mind*, *The Mindset Continuum*, *The Agile Learner* and *The Learning Landscape*.

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