



## Building Learning Power at Kialla West Primary School

Kialla West PS is a rural school 7 kilometres out of Shepparton. The school has an enrolment of approximately 190 children from largely middle class families. There are 8 classroom teachers, 1 librarian and a language coordinator.

We were completely unaware of the Building Learning Power (BLP) program until our principal attended a study tour in the United Kingdom during November 2005. Upon his return he discussed Guy Claxton's approaches towards learning with us. Our staff could see many benefits in using a common language with students, staff and parents. Many teachers were teaching these BLP skills in their classes but we all had different phrases and placed a greater emphasis in different areas.

We were interested in BLP because it focused on the student as an individual. This program is not based solely on academic results; it is more about developing the whole person. These are skills that are used and developed throughout life, whether it be at school, home, social settings and employment.

The first strategy we tried was to try to cut out the use of the word "work". This was very difficult but we made it into a bit of a game in the room and the children loved picking us up on this. We started by discussing "What a good learner does", then we discussed "What to do if you get stuck." From here we introduced the brain or our working muscle. We used the analogy of exercising being good for increasing our muscles and that by exercising our brain we can also help it to grow and get stronger. We started with resilience as they already had some knowledge of this concept through the "You Can Do It" initiative. As a staff we discussed the four capacities in that domain and thought of examples for each of them. We then covered reciprocity, resourcefulness and reflectiveness in that order, in the same way.

Meaningful [classroom displays](#) have been an important way of teaching the children about the different BLP approaches. Many displays were created through collaboration: *what makes a good learner*; *things to do when I get stuck* and the *learning toolbox*. Other classroom displays included such tools as: *raindrops under an umbrella*; *learning tree branches*; *learning stars*; *learning petals on a flower*; *an octopuses' learning garden*; *brainpower thermometer*, etc. We believe that it is important for the children to create these displays in order to make their learning both exciting and meaningful. We also created display areas with theme questions and a learning wall for children to show their learning.

We have seen many benefits of this program since introducing it to Kialla West PS. The children have become very positive towards their learning. They enjoy the various challenges put before them and are able to clearly see themselves using some of the many capacities. The children are also developing the ability to see the positive attributes of others and of the work that they produce. They are also able to accept the thoughts and ideas of the other children around them in a very encouraging and constructive manner. Many of the children are also gaining an understanding of the areas that they as individuals, may need to work on; such as planning and organising their ideas, asking questions, etc.

Building Learning Power is becoming part of the culture at Kialla West Primary School. We believe that the program will enrich the lives of those that experience this way of teaching and learning.

Visit the Kialla West Primary School website at <http://www.kiallawestps.vic.edu.au/>  
Visit the Building Learning Power website at <http://www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk/>