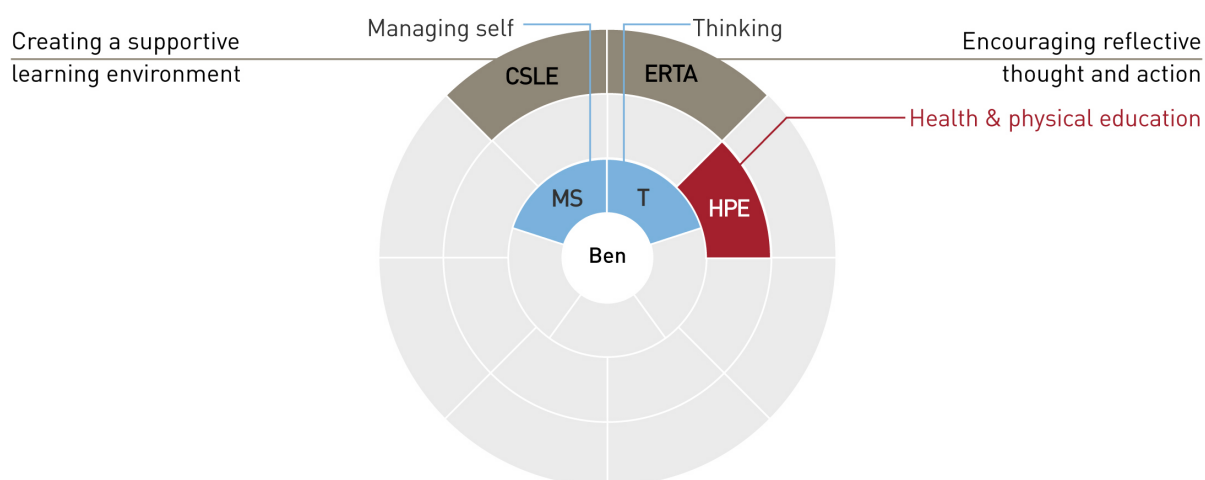


Ben's good decisions in class

Links to the curriculum



Student background

Name	Ben	Ben's strengths include reading, mathematics, and basketball. Ben is in a class with seven other students, two teachers and three full-time teacher aides at a special school.
Age	14	
School	Secondary	

Ben has developmental dyspraxia. A behaviour management programme is operating in Ben's class and fits in with a year-long thematic plan entitled, "Money, Money, Money!" where the focus is economic activity and resources. Students reflect and self-monitor their behaviour in terms of the key competencies. They give themselves a mark against each key competency at three points across the day. Six is the highest mark and two is the lowest mark (see information under the heading "Effective pedagogy" for more detail).

Students also undertake jobs (within a life skills context), including vacuuming, washing dishes, and so on, and at the end of the week, students can be paid \$1.00 providing their behaviour has not been a barrier to participation. Students have a target number of points to achieve, set on an individual basis, in order to be able to "bank" their money. The money banked over the course of the term is available to spend on the last outing of the term. Honesty about behaviour is encouraged. Ben enjoys this programme and it provides him with a tangible motivator.

Two learning stories

- 1. Acceptance** 17 March 2008
- 2. A good decision** 18 March 2008

This string of learning stories shows Ben trying to manage himself in class when his main classroom teacher is absent. Ben is thinking things through more and accepting greater responsibility for his actions.

Acceptance

Student	Ben	Date	17 March 2008
Topic	Points and banking	Observer	Sara (teacher)

Both Chris and Sara were absent from school on Friday so we did points and banking on Monday. I decided to do it individually and in private as I was aware there had been a mishap.

When it was Ben's turn, I asked him how Friday had gone. He looked a little bashful. As we went through the key competencies, Ben identified the areas where he had been okay and the areas that he had not done so well in. He was most specific about the fact that he had not listened to Liz (teacher aide), in particular, and had given her a hard time.

As we had privacy, I was able to share with Ben how I was disappointed that he had been rude to Liz. Privacy was important firstly, so that I could be honest with Ben and vice versa, and secondly, so we could talk without others listening in and adding to his anxiety that he had not made a good choice on Friday. I reminded him of the need to listen to all members of staff and that today (Monday) was a good opportunity to show Liz that he could in fact listen and cooperate. I reminded Ben that although he had let himself down on Friday, he had been doing a really good job recently.

Ben listened, worked through his points honestly (and fairly) and was able to bank his dollar, as he still had sufficient points. He then returned to class where he apologised to Liz and went on to make some very good choices.

Well done Ben for reflecting honestly on your week and going on to make good choices.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Ben has not always been able to accept hearing comments about negative behaviour. He was able to listen to what I had to say, act on it and make amends with Liz.

Key competencies

Managing self

- I can make a mistake and be ok about it.

Learning areas

Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: interpersonal skills

- Express their own ideas, needs, wants, and feelings clearly and listen to those of other people.

Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: identity, sensitivity, and respect

- Demonstrate respect through sharing and co-operation in groups.

Where to next?

Celebrate and consolidate

Well done Ben you were honest in reflecting on your behaviour and, more importantly, you moved on from it. We will continue to support you as you take more responsibility for all of your behaviour, not just when you have made a poor decision, but your good behaviour as well!

A good decision

Student	Ben	Date	18 March 2008
		Observer	Sara (teacher)

Ben had an appointment this morning and arrived just in time for morning tea. Heated words were exchanged between Ben and another student but I was out of the room and by the time I came back to class, it was over (Ben had apologised although the apology had not yet been accepted).

When it came to points for the second session, Ben instantly said, "6, 6, 6, 6..." I asked Ben if he had had a slight wobble when he came into class. Ben said, "Oh yeah!" We then went slowly through the points for each key competency. Ben thought about his actions and acknowledged that he had not achieved full points for the session, and that this related only to specific key competencies (using language, symbols, and texts; managing self; and relating to others) so that he did not need to be marked down in all categories. (Ben had participated fully in the literacy programme completing *all* the work set and was able to earn six points in thinking, and participating and contributing).

Ben's classmate did not accept his apology immediately but Ben gave him space and, after a while, repeated the apology, which was then accepted.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Ben was honest about his actions (with a gentle reminder) and took ownership for his behaviour. This is part of his journey of learning to manage himself. He was able to reflect about how he could have changed his entrance to class and have avoided the disagreement with his friend. Ben was able to consider the effect of his behaviour on his classmate and how the classmate felt as a result. More importantly, he could also reflect on the fact that although he had initially made a poor decision, subsequent good choices in participating in classroom activities showed he had moved on. Ben also apologised for the situation. This shows that he independently recognised that he had made a poor decision.

Ben has demonstrated he is increasingly taking responsibility for his actions.

Key competencies

Thinking

- I can make choices.
- I can figure it out.

Managing self

- I can make a mistake and be ok about it.

Learning areas

Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: interpersonal skills

- Express their own ideas, needs, wants, and feelings clearly and listen to those of other people.

Level 1 health and physical education: Relationships with Other People: identity, sensitivity, and respect

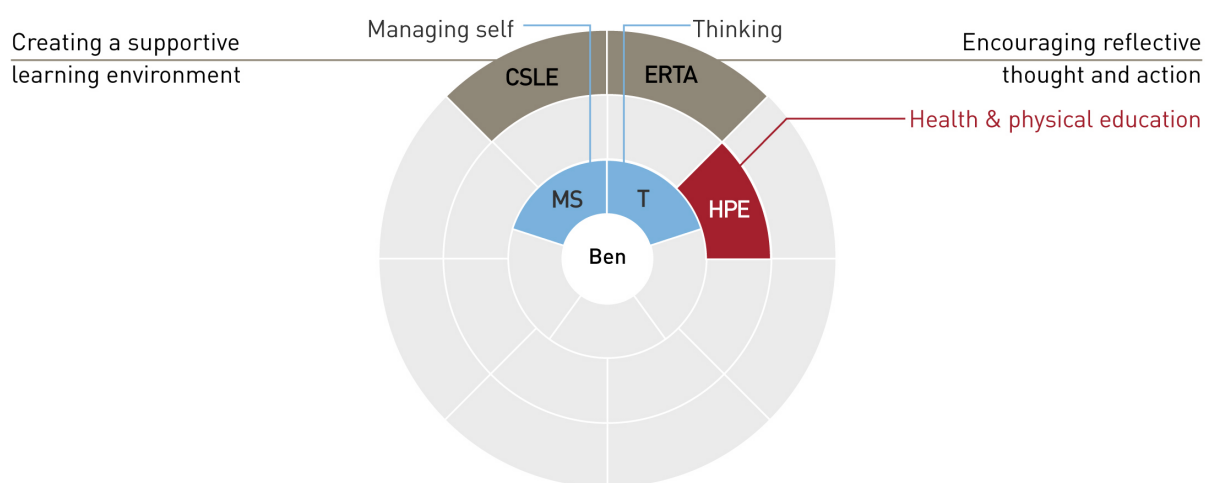
- Demonstrate respect through sharing and co-operation in groups.

Where to next?

Celebrate and consolidate

Ben is now able to accept a prompt from me to remind him of the need for honesty (when I questioned if he had had a wobble). Ben, we will continue to encourage and support you to reflect on and take ownership of your behaviour and we will also continue to celebrate your success. We will remind you of strategies that can help you, such as going onto the plinth (a box in our room that students can stand on when they feel stressed) so that others can recognise you are feeling tense; asking for teacher talk time; and removing yourself from a potentially bad situation.

Reflection – what these stories exemplify



Key competencies

Managing self is at the foreground of Ben's learning, with thinking also highlighted where Ben is reflecting on his behaviour and trying to improve his behaviour in certain situations.

How might these stories strengthen Ben's identity as a learner?

In these learning stories, Ben demonstrated that he could take ownership of his behaviour. Ben was able (albeit with a reminder) to be honest about behaviour that had occurred (agency). This learning happened in class. A second string of learning stories, "Ben's Good Decisions at Sport", reflects Ben taking ownership of his behaviour in other situations (breadth). Although the learning stories demonstrate learning over two days, they reflect one small part of Ben's recorded progress since February 2007. Ben has been increasingly able to take responsibility for his behaviour after working with his main classroom teacher for over a year. A second teacher has been working in his classroom from term 1, 2008. This string of stories illustrates that Ben is becoming more able to listen and respond to others. He is able to accept prompts around his behaviour with a variety of other students. Ben chose to be honest in his interaction with the writer of the string in the absence of the main classroom teacher (depth).

For more information on the four dimensions of agency, breadth, continuity, and depth (ABCDs), refer to *Narrative assessment: a guide for teachers*.

Learning areas

Level 1 health and physical education

This learning links interpersonal skills and identity, sensitivity, and respect. Ben worked to make amends for situations by being honest and taking responsibility for his actions to work towards improving relationships.

Effective pedagogy

What does this tell us about teaching and learning in this setting?

Ben understands that we want him to be able to manage himself. The behaviour management programme supports Ben and others in the class with this. When students are successful in managing their behaviour, they can better access the school programmes to facilitate learning (creating a supportive learning environment). The behaviour management programme provides a consistent means of monitoring and managing behaviour in the class. Students self-monitor, which gives them a sense of control and also responsibility.

When points are recovered at the end of each session, praise is given for success. Where a 4 (or even a 2) is given, a specific area for improvement is targeted and a student will be supported with specific strategies to improve their points for the following session. For example, if Ben scored 4 for managing himself – perhaps he lost his temper because someone stared at him. In the subsequent session, Ben would be encouraged to look for support or change seats if a similar situation were to occur.

In order to encourage honesty and to help students improve the way they behave in certain situations, reflective thought and action is encouraged. Ben is given time to reflect on his actions and we work together, sometimes as a whole class, sometimes individually, to make good decisions if a similar situation occurs.

Reflective questions for the reader

“How do I use a behaviour management programme to support my students?”

“How do I help my students manage when there are changes to routines and staff?”

Useful resources

Mitchell, D. (2008). *What really works in special and inclusive education: using evidence-based teaching strategies*. Abingdon [England]: Routledge.

The William Glasser Institute. *Choice theory*. Available at <http://www.wglasser.com/>.