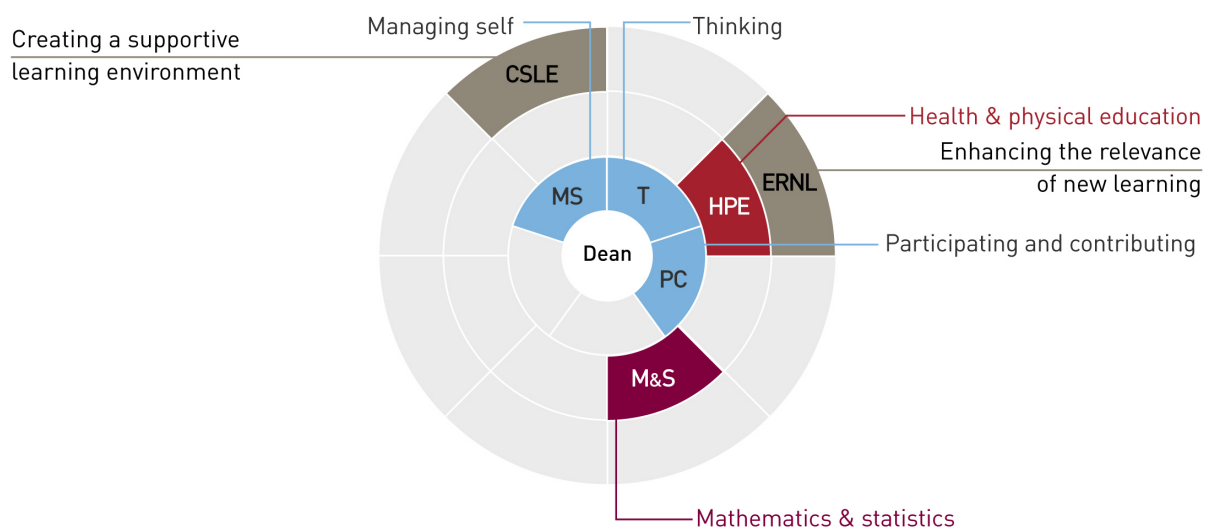


Dean thinking things through

Links to the curriculum



Student background

Name	Dean
Age	14
Year	9
School	Secondary

Dean has incredible hand-eye co-ordination and enjoys using Playstation at home. He has a permanent head injury and is deaf in one ear. He gets very tired and finds it difficult to follow instructions.

Dean receives funding support from the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC). This includes funding for a full-time teacher aide. Dean only began full-time schooling in his last term of year 8. Since term 4, 2007, we have worked with ACC, Dean's father, and Dean's previous school towards a successful transition to secondary school. We expect this process to take all of 2008. The main goal is to support Dean to engage in the classroom and to manage his behaviour so he can access the curriculum.

As learning team leader of the Learning Centre, my role is to oversee Dean's programme and help him, with the support of his family, make the transition to secondary school. I also co-ordinate the input from the ACC team, and oversee teacher aide support on a period-by-period basis.

A standard exercise book is used to record learning events for Dean. This is done primarily by his teacher aide and this information is shared with everyone who works with Dean and his family. These jottings have formed the basis of this string of learning stories. They also inform his individual education programme (IEP).

One string of learning stories

This string of learning stories (from term 3, 2008) shows Dean beginning not only to transfer what he has learned through his successes in physical education to other subjects but also, as he develops confidence, beginning to engage more actively in the learning process.

Dean thinking things through

Student	Dean	Date	July to September 2008
		Observer	Joan (team leader)

Dean was new to our high school this year. Initially he faced significant challenges to stay on task, stay on site, keep safe and engage with learning. He has a fulltime teacher aide. Using his physical education skills as a motivator (see exemplar Going with Dean's strengths), we have been able to help Dean to stay in classes longer and he is beginning to engage with what is happening around him.

The long-term goal is to encourage Dean to carry on working things through and to stay with learning activities in classes, other than physical education.

24 July Dean is working with more enthusiasm this term. Today, he attempted to work by himself in mathematics and did a really good job. He stayed on task, completed some of the activities, and stayed for the whole period. His mathematics teacher was very pleased with him. The positive comments and a merit card were well earned. Dean is very proud of his efforts.

15 August Dean started slowly in social sciences: social studies but after a couple of attempts at the task he was focused and completed two paragraphs. Later in the afternoon at mathematics, the activity was playing games on the computer. Dean stayed on task, he attempted the games, and enjoyed himself. Dean is starting to get on with activities of his own accord rather than waiting for prompts from the teacher aide.
Over the last week in August, Dean had a very good spell. He got eight merit cards and though he did not engage actively in some subjects, he stayed quiet and calm. This is real change.

22 August The mathematics teacher asked students to get into groups of four. Six of the boys sat at a table and no one would move. Dean said, "Two of you have to leave. Listen to what the teacher is saying". Two got up and left without comment while the teacher aide watched amused.
Dean is learning how to follow instructions. On-task behaviour results in positive outcomes for him and he is gaining confidence. It is great to see Dean keen to get on with the task and encouraging others. I hope this will happen again in mathematics and other classes. His taking the initiative was a first!! The other students accepted his lead!

5 September Dean is responding to a change of approach by the teacher in mathematics. Dean is actively working with a friend on number, using visual aids to help their understanding. He is enjoying this and working positively. When Dean is paired with someone of similar ability he is able to share in the discussion and contribute.

6 September Dean started one-to-one cooking lessons this term with the occupational therapist in his ACC support team. They used the facilities in the Learning Centre kitchen. The purpose was to get him motivated to try similar activities at home and to prepare for moving into the food technology option.



Today, Dean was able to follow the steps of a recipe, with support, (using verbal and visual prompts) and to see the task through from beginning to end, with appropriate breaks. At one point he paused and you could see him working through his options. He decided to have chocolate chips in his cookies.

Dean was very proud of himself and he enjoyed eating his cookies. While he was prepared to share his bounty with me, he was very excited about taking some home to show his Dad.

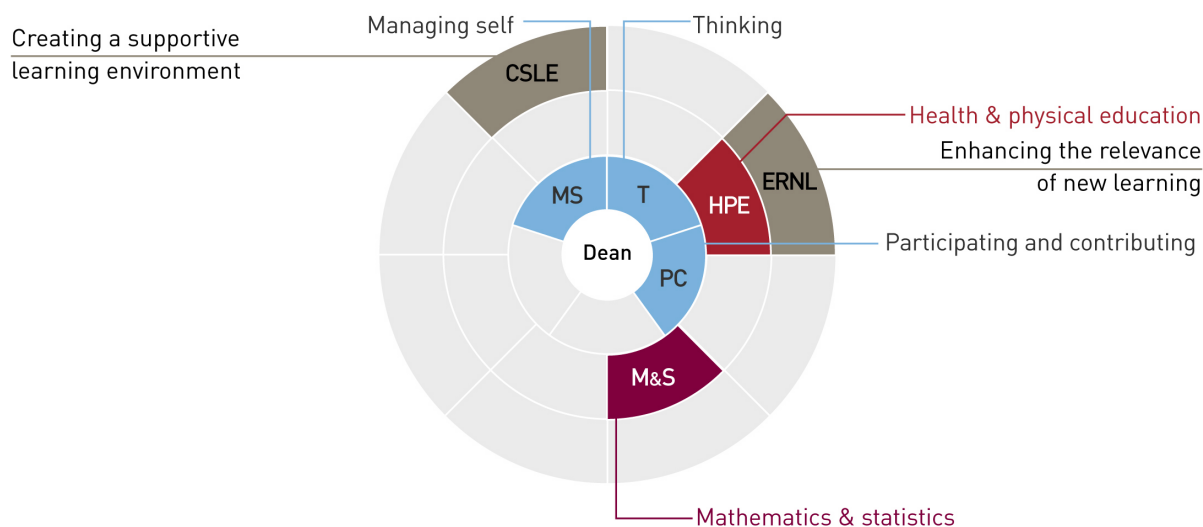
11 September In Health P1 class, where the topic was puberty, Dean listened and asked a few questions. This marked a change in his behaviour in class and showed real engagement. Before this, he has been happy to listen and follow instructions.

12 September In his learning support session, Dean designed a picture for a character profile and completed a worksheet. He also had to figure out how to read a map. He asked lots of questions and worked steadily. He still prefers to work on his own. Generally, when he works with others he finds it hard to concentrate and gets distracted easily.

Analysis – what learning is happening here?

Dean has an excellent relationship with his father. I noticed in our meetings how he listened and agreed when his father was speaking. It is evident, too, that he is responding very well to his mathematics, science, and physical education teachers and his teacher aide – who are all male. Dad speaks clearly and slowly, so I copy this pattern when giving Dean instructions and have made this suggestion to his teachers.

Reflection – what these stories exemplify



Key competencies

This string of learning stories shows Dean extending his skills (thinking) and moving from being passive to some active engagement in the learning process (managing self). Dean is using the positive experiences he has had in physical education and around physical activity to move towards more involvement in other subjects, particularly in mathematics and statistics (level 1 Number and Algebra: number knowledge). He is beginning to contribute to class discussion and to participate in a group of students, rather than just working for part of the lesson with his teacher aide.

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

Dean is exhibiting the ability to decide how and when he engages in learning, and with whom, as his confidence grows (agency).

There is evidence that Dean is beginning to transfer those skills across a range of subjects (breadth). Dean has developed socially over time; he has gained confidence and has increased his positive interactions with others. There is continued progress with his learning, in a range of subjects, with a range of people (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

Level 1 mathematics and statistics

This string of learning stories shows Dean beginning to transfer skills across learning areas. His ability to manage himself in physical education has been extended to managing himself better in other areas; for example, mathematics, health education, where he lacked confidence or real understanding of what he needed to do to participate. He is beginning to engage more with both his teachers and other students.

Effective pedagogy

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

The key to Dean's increased on-task behaviour and engagement with his learning has been his success at soccer (see exemplar, "Going with Dean's strengths). Soccer has given Dean a boost to his self-esteem and confidence, which is now transferring to other classes (enhancing the relevance of new learning).

The strategies, which were developed with his support team and family to meet Dean's needs, have been successful, and have provided him with a structure and patterning, which have enabled him to participate in the learning process (creating a supportive learning environment). As Dean has gained confidence, he is having less time out of class. He is increasingly working with others and has started to ask questions to gain a better understanding of what he is learning. He has recently completed his first full-time year at school!

Reflective question for the reader

"How do you meet the challenge of designing a relevant and effective model of learning that enables students to control their own behaviour so they can actively participate in the learning process?"

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/>.