

Aspiration, Resilience, Awareness; a career learning curriculum for KS3/KS4

Introduction from the authors: Andy Midwinter and Jo Brown

Much careers education in the past has lacked ambition, being focused on a choice (of job or course) and inevitably simplistic models of decision making (which may need to fit into a one-off lesson). Our experience of working with students over many years has indicated that

decision making is often more circuitous than that acknowledged by the curriculum; it may be lengthy, highly personal, and subject to a kaleidoscopic range of influences. This programme seeks to respond to these observations by providing opportunities for students to reflect; the lessons are dominated by the question, 'what does this mean for me?'

Student reflection needs to be underpinned by a rich knowledge base. The lessons address this pivotal aspect of the Gatsby Benchmarks¹; students are asked to think widely about opportunities and availability, challenged to think unstereotypically (about jobs and courses), and prepared (as early as year 7) to learn from employers.

The lessons also address the broad targets for careers work outlined by the Department for Education in their 'Careers Strategy'², namely students should be enabled to develop positive attitudes – towards themselves, their plans and employment. The word 'learning', rather than 'education', seems to better reflect the scope of our programme, since we seek to develop these attitudes in a way that will be sustained. We would add that this responsibility largely falls to the curriculum, because attitudes, particularly shifts in attitude, can only be developed over time. A recent evidence-based review of careers work echoes this emphasis on developmental learning, arguing that while activity-based approaches (employer visits, STEM events, careers fairs, etc) and work with individuals are both vital, they should be considered as additions to provision that is very firmly 'led' by the curriculum³.

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¹ The Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2018), *Good Careers Guidance: Reaching the Gatsby Benchmarks*

² Department for Education (2017), *Careers Strategy; making the most of everyone's skills and talents*

³ Hooley, T., Marriott, J., Watts, A.G. and Coiffait, L. (2012), *Careers 2020: Options for future careers work in English schools*

Why Aspiration, Resilience and Awareness?

Aspiration is at the core of career learning. Its adoption by students is dependent upon self-esteem, inspiration and a sense of personal agency - themes we continually return to.

Resilience begins with ownership of plans, and is bolstered by a sense of open-mindedness. We engage students in strategies for its development, including learning from setbacks.

Awareness includes the traditional emphasis on knowledge of opportunities and self. Students also examine the potential impact of 'barriers' and of positive influences.

Rationale

1. We use a 'values, skills and knowledge' lesson structure. We have found this structure, used widely in PHSE, a valuable starting point to interpret the interdependence of aspiration, resilience and awareness. It has enabled us to break down the aims of our lessons into component objectives. Its use has also meant we have never lost sight of the 'values' element of a lesson (for example, taking responsibility); if values are omitted, even the most up-to-date and well taught careers programme will lack impact. We use 8 core values, one or more of which are developed in every lesson:

1. Valuing self
2. Valuing honest self-reflection
3. Valuing positive influences
4. Valuing qualifications
5. Valuing planning ahead
6. Valuing being open minded
7. Valuing aspiration
8. Valuing careers support (CEIAG)

2. We have used stories throughout the programme, for example, online film clips of people talking about their jobs. Personal accounts often give the best possible opportunities for students to reflect on the challenges of career planning in an unpredictable world. Additionally, they can enable students to define key 'values' themselves. They also often inspire!

3. We start in year 7. The values, skills and knowledge that young people will require to become empowered to make career decisions are sophisticated; they need to be introduced and then returned to.

4. Our lessons are detailed. We were keen to give fulsome instructions, with clear learning points, recognising that careers is often delivered by non-specialists with limited 'subject' knowledge.

The Indigo Framework

The secondary school curricula are founded on programmes of study that aim to capture the 'essentials' of what should be taught in each key stage. Consideration also needs to be given to whether students are 'next stage ready' (any major theme needs to be introduced and assessed before higher-level understanding is attempted later on).

Applying this thinking to a framework for career learning lessons has sharpened our focus on what exactly needs to 'go before', and of course much needs to go before in career learning to inspire students to make the most of opportunities. In addition, the new emphasis on what can be 'taught' (the skills, knowledge, understandings that students should acquire) has ensured that the framework for lessons has an exactitude that can be easily evaluated. So this framework attempts:

- a high degree of specificity
- to capture the 'essentials' of each key stage
- to ensure that themes are covered incrementally

The Framework for KS3 lessons

Students will be taught to:	
1.	Define skills and personal qualities
2.	Be able to express what they are good at and interested in
3.	Understand why qualifications are important
4.	Recognise the link between school conduct and employability skills
5.	Understand that subjects will develop skills that employers value
6.	Understand the importance of presenting yourself in a positive way
7.	Know that the content of KS4 courses should be considered when choosing options
8.	Know that some post-GCSE options require a GCSE in that subject
9.	Be able to explain post-16 progression routes
10.	Understand what is meant by the EBacc
11.	Use the school's careers resources (including Indigo)
12.	Know that jobs may be 'grouped' and how this categorisation can be used
13.	Be able to ask employers questions
14.	Identify different kinds of work and that people enjoy jobs for different reasons
15.	Be able to recognise stereotypes and how they can limit choice
16.	Be able to recognise bias in those providing advice on option choices
17.	Know sources of impartial advice and guidance

The Framework for KS4 lessons

Students will be taught to:	
1.	Know the skills and attitudes that employers commonly value
2.	Understand the benefits of work experience and other extra-curricular activities in developing employability skills
3.	Understand the value of career exploration (looking at a range of learning and job options)
4.	Give an account of their plans and what they hope to achieve
5.	Understand what is meant by entrepreneurship
6.	Understand that some jobs are competitive to get, and others less so
7.	Understand that the future of work is unpredictable
8.	Understand the importance of work in terms of personal health and wellbeing
9.	Understand Health and Safety issues in the workplace
10.	Know the key features of all post-16 opportunities
11.	Understand what is meant by university
12.	Know how to find out more about post-16 opportunities
13.	Understand that post-16 providers offer different learning experiences
14.	Know the advantages and disadvantages to them as individuals of the different post-16 qualifications (vocational/A levels)
15.	Understand the importance of looking beyond the next step (student destination information, progression routes from apprenticeships)
16.	Know how to apply for a course or apprenticeship
17.	Know how to prepare for a job interview
18.	Write a CV/application form
19.	Be aware of the barriers to successful choices (eg prejudice about certain jobs/options, influence of friends)
20.	Know the role of a careers adviser and the purpose of a careers interview
21.	Seek out people who can help (know the importance of networking)

Keeping of student work

We hope that students will see the value of keeping a 'careers file' to store written work and research – reflections that can be built upon. Notably, many lessons focus on knowledge of self, and a student's learning (recorded even as early as KS3) may be of considerable help when writing a CV in year 11. It could be argued that a good CV is the best possible success indicator for your entire programme.

Evaluation

There is no one tool for measuring the success of a career learning programme, although we suggest two possible approaches, which can be used in tandem:

1. Evaluation against the Career Learning Framework (above)

By evaluating the 'essentials' of each key stage you are ensuring that key elements have been taught and that these 'essentials' have had impact.

2. Evaluation of learning objectives

Learning objectives, as outlined in each lesson, can also form the basis for evaluation. A focus on lesson objectives not only enables evaluation of a particular lesson, but in addition can help determine the degree to which your programme has engendered less tangible objectives over a key stage (for example, valuing positive influences or the motivation to plan).

Evaluation tools

1. The plenary activities in each lesson are very often a way of assessing the effectiveness of the lesson against the objectives.

2. Interview groups of students to explore similar themes (a conversation gives you a chance to ask follow-up questions, and students are often freer with feedback than on a form, and feedback is often more nuanced).

3. Use a questionnaire relating to just one lesson or perhaps a whole key stage, of which the following overleaf is an example (relating to Key Stage 4):

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1. How sure are you about your choices for the end of year 11?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Very unsure

Very sure

2. How confident are you that you know your skills and qualities?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Very confident

Very confident

3. How positive do you feel about your future plans?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Very negative

Very positive

4. How aware are you of sources of help and advice in planning your future?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Very unaware

Very aware

5. To what extent do you agree with the statement 'my career planning is my responsibility'?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Do not agree at all

Totally agree

6. How aware are you of biased advice?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Don't understand what this means

Very aware

7. Do you have an understanding of the skills and qualities that employers value?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

No understanding

Good understanding

8. Does the motivation 'to be the best that I can be' influence you?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

No influence on me

Strong influence

Ordering and timing of lessons

The lesson plans are in year groups. They have no lesson number attached to them, although the suggested sequence is given in the 'Programme of Study' plan (below). The year 11 lessons focus on post-16 options and applying for them, so are designed for the autumn term. Similarly, the year 9 lessons need to be timed before KS4 choices. The work experience lessons sit in year 10, but need to be timed to coincide within your programme, whether year 10 or 11. Health and Safety at work is a theme designed to be stand alone at any point in KS4, so can be delivered even if you do not offer a work experience programme.

Indigo Programme of Study KS3 and 4

Year 7		
Lesson	Theme	Learning outcomes
1. What is Careers Education?	Taking responsibility	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of thinking ahead • Beginning to take responsibility • The importance of self-reflection <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Careers Education? • Why is it important?
2. Inviting a visiting speaker to talk about their job (4 lessons): (1) The invitation (2) Preparing questions (3) Body language (4) Hosting and reflection	Career research/ Self-presentation	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career exploration <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills/asking the right questions • Self-presentation <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of job information • Of the transferable skills which employers value
3. What am I good at? (2 lessons): (1) Skills and personal qualities (2) Multiple Intelligence Theory, Howard Gardner	Self-reflection	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive self-image • The importance of self-reflection <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to self-reflect <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of self

Year 8		
Lesson	Theme	Learning outcomes
1. Job families; how and why jobs are categorised	Career exploration	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career exploration/importance of being open minded • Aspiration and being the best I can be <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of job information
2. Using careers information (2 lessons): (1) Value of research (2) Resources/ websites	Research skills	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career exploration/importance of being open minded • Aspiration and being the best I can be <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of job information
3. Self-reflection; selling yourself	Self-reflection	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive self-image • The importance of self-reflection <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to self-reflect <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of self
4. What influences me? (2 lessons): (1) Decisions and character (2) Shaping the future	Self-reflection	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive self-image • Valuing positive influences <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify influences <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influences on decisions

Year 9		
Lesson	Theme	Learning outcomes
1. Stereotyping (2 lessons): (1) Impact on planning (2) Influences on subject choice	Barriers to choice/Positive influences	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive influences <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify stereotypes <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influences on decisions
2. Knowing my KS4 options (2 lessons): (1) Making informed choices (2) Qualification options	The importance of qualifications/ Employability skills	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being positive about learning and qualifications <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify influences <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of levels and types of qualification • Of the transferable skills which employers value
3. Finding good careers information and advice	Research skills/ Identifying influences	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking responsibility • Valuing positive influences <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify influences • Research skills <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of job information
4. Who can help me?	Knowing who can help with 1:1 advice and guidance	<p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who can help me - sources of unbiased advice and guidance

Year 10		
Lesson	Theme	Learning outcomes
1. Aspiration in practice	Taking responsibility/ Employability skills	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking responsibility • Valuing the skills and experience employers seek • Aspiration and being the best I can be <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being assertive around choices <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose and value of work experience • Employability skills and qualities
2. Employability; what skills and qualities do employers look for?	What do employers look for?	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing the skills and qualities employers look for <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflection <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability skills and qualities
3. Work experience; introduction and diary	Exploring the benefits of work experience and introduction to the diary	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing the skills, qualities and experiences employers seek <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills – asking the right questions <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose and value of work experience
4. The importance of a positive attitude in the workplace	Attitudes as a key aspect of employability (and as a key aspect of a successful work experience placement)	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of attitude • Skills • Ways to demonstrate a positive attitude <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability qualities

Year 10 continued		
Lesson	Theme	Learning outcomes
5. Work experience; contacting an employer	Letter/phone skills as a preparation for work experience	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking responsibility <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-presentation <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability skills and qualities • Purpose and value of work experience
6. Health and Safety in the workplace	Staying safe on work experience	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety in the workplace <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being alert to potential dangers <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the potential threats that most commonly cause injury • Understand that Health and Safety is everyone's responsibility
7. Work experience; debrief - what did I gain?	Review of work experience learning and achievements	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing the skills, qualities and experiences employers seek • Career exploration and the importance of being open-minded • The importance of self-reflection • Valuing positive influences <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to self-reflect • Self-presentation • Ability to respond to setbacks <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose and value of work experience • Employability skills and qualities

Year 10 continued		
Lesson	Theme	Learning outcomes
8. Competition for jobs	Handling change/ Labour market information	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking responsibility • Valuing the skills and experience employers look for • Aspiration and being the best I can be <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills (asking the right questions) • Handling change/ability to respond to setbacks <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability skills and qualities • Purpose and value of work experience • Labour market information
9. Not in education, employment or training (NEET)		<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of qualifications and training • Employment as a component of health and well-being <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling change/ability to respond to setbacks <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour market information
10. Careers research	Research skills	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career exploration and the importance of being open-minded <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills/asking the right questions <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of qualification levels/options/progression routes and destinations

Year 11		
Lesson	Theme	Learning outcomes
1. Writing a CV (3 lessons): (1) Identifying skills and qualities (2) The personal statement (3) Creating the CV from a template	Self-presentation	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive self-image <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-presentation <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability skills and qualities
2. Interview skills	Self-presentation	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive self-image <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-presentation <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability skills and qualities
3. Entrepreneurship (2 lessons): (1) Understanding business (2) Attributes of entrepreneurs	An experience of entrepreneurial thinking	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking responsibility <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To think in an entrepreneurial way <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-employment as a future option • Understanding businesses and business success • Attributes of entrepreneurs
4. Post-16 options (3 lessons): (1) What do I want to know? (2) Researching options (3) Student presentations and planning	Research	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of qualifications <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking the right questions <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding post-16 options

Year 11 continued		
Lesson	Theme	Learning outcomes
5. Job hunting; some successful approaches	Exploring the role of resilience and networking	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking responsibility <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling change/ability to respond to setbacks <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <p>Who can help me?</p>
6. Job hunting for Apprenticeships	Apprenticeship application process	<p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research skills <p>Knowledge/Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour market information
7. Choosing A levels	Advice on choosing A level subjects	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest self-reflection <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing influences <p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of qualifications