# A Guide to 'ELLI' – the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory

ELLI is an initiative that has been created to help young children gain a greater understanding of the different ways in which they learn. By helping children to understand what they need to do to get better at learning, and by equipping them with a 'language of learning,' we can help them to become more effective and successful learners. The ELLI approach is also a commitment to a shared set of values that permeate all aspects of school life: learning, attendance, behaviour, relationships, respect, belonging, self-esteem and independence.

The ELLI initiative recognises that all successful learners share seven characteristics. These are represented in school by seven learning characters. Each character represents a learning style and is referred to when children are embarking on new activities. For example, if we are starting something new, such as learning to write a new word, we would remind ourselves to be 'Resilient Tortoises'. This is a character which never gives up and keeps on trying.

By constantly using the language of the ELLI characters, we can embed it in the children and make it part of their everyday use. So, what are the characters and the seven dimensions of learning?

Resilience: The Resilient Tortoise - the Resilient Tortoise, like the tortoise in the famous story of the Hare and the Tortoise, never gives up. Even when he finds something difficult or hard to do, the Resilient Tortoise keeps on trying. He also has a hard shell that helps deflect negative comments and to accept feedback positively. We use expressions such as:
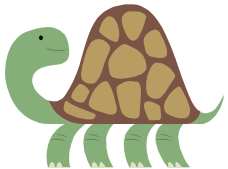
'We mustn't give up! We have to keep on trying! Be resilient! Persevere!'

Learning relationships: Busy Bees – the Busy Bee, like a real bee, works as part of a team. He does not work by himself, but instead collaborates with his peers to help create a better team of workers. The Busy Bee has to make sure he is talking to the other members of his team. He also has to ensure that he is listening to the other members of his team – there is no point in talking to each other if nobody is listening to each other! The Busy Bee also has to make sure that everybody in the group has a job to do and that nobody is standing around doing nothing. We use expressions such as:

'Talk to each other! Listen to each other! Has everybody got a job to do? What are you doing in your team?'

Creativity: The Magical Unicorn – the Magical Unicorn is a character that encourages the children to be creative and imaginative in everything that they do. We tell the children a story about some children who always did the same sorts of drawings, paintings, dances and other activities. Then one day a magical unicorn visited them, sprinkled magical dust onto them and transformed them into children who were adventurous, imaginative and bold in their creativity. We encourage the children to use this creativity in everything that they do – art, dance, construction, role-play, writing, etc. The Magical Unicorn says:

'Be creative! Take a risk. Let your ideas bubble out! Share the magic inside you. Let's be imagineers!'

Strategic Awareness: The Wise Owl – The Wise Owl is a strategic thinker. He plans what he is going to do before he does it. We explain to the children that a real owl flies high above the ground and studies his prey down below. He plans what he is going to do before he does it. The children do the same in their work. They plan how they are going do what they are going to do - and then they do it. They might do this planning on paper, as a drawing or verbally. From this planning they might build a model, create a mini garden, do some writing ... We use expressions such as:

'Plan what you are going to do. Think ahead. Imagine what it will look like when it is finished and make it the same in real life.'

Making Links: The Connecting Spider – The Connecting Spider makes links between the different things that he has been learning. The Connecting Spider brings what he has learnt before and joins it to what he is learning now. He solidifies and embeds his learning. The opposite of making meaning is data accumulation – learning empty facts without understanding. We say things like:
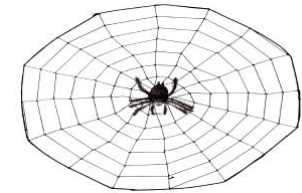
'Do you remember how...? How does this relate to... Draw your ideas together. Connect your thoughts together to make ideas in your head.'
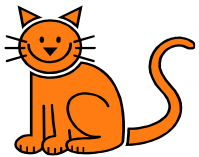
Critical Curiosity: The Curious Cat – The Curious Cat is full of questions. He loves to find out more about the World around him. He likes to dig a little deeper to find out how things work and answer his own questions. We introduce the Curious Cat through work on our senses. Many children respond well to a multi-sensory approach to learning. Across the school we encourage the children to ask questions, explore, investigate and find things out in a practical, hands-on way. We say things like:

'What does that feel, smell, taste, sound, look like? What questions to you want to ask? What do you want to find out about...?'

Changing and Learning: The Changing Chameleon – The Changing Chameleon loves to learn. He has a sense of himself as a learner. He knows that he can get better at things over time, that he can set goals for himself to meet and that he will get there in the end. The Changing Chameleon will have an idea about the things they want to learn next and can see where they are going. We say things to the children like:

'What do you want to learn? Make a wish – what do you want to learn about next? There's no such thing as can't, just 'can't yet' Don't be stuck.'
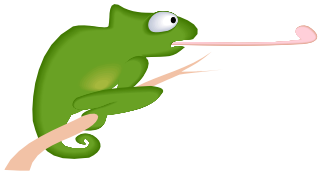
This table summarises the negative side of being a closed learner. The Positive pole is what we want our children to be.

Positive Pole	Negative Pole
Changing and Learning (Changing Chameleon)	Being Stuck
Meaning Making (Connecting Spider)	Data Accumulation
Critical Curiosity (Curious Cat)	Passivity
Creativity (Magical Unicorn)	Rule bound
Learning Relationships (Busy Bees)	Isolation
Strategic Awareness (Wise Old Owl)	Robotic
Resilience (Resilient Tortoise)	Dependent