



LIGHTS ON!

My 5 proven steps that will switch on your child's Lights.



An overview of my 5 step framework

If your children or learners could spend their time doing anything - what would it be?



Step 1 Locate The Switch

The priority outcome of this stage is to discover what switches on our lights and whose lights are on or off. It is ok, at this stage, if some don't know and you must make that explicit. We'll get to know ourselves as learners, discover new things and explore what we are really capable of achieving. Are we introverted or extroverted thinkers? Which of our multiple intelligences do we tend to draw on the most? Do we actually have 'our thing' that switches on our lights or are we yet to really find it? Listen to Ruby who took some time to find her switch but when she did, it transformed her life.

After this stage you should be able to look at your learners as artists, engineers, mathematicians, writers, entrepreneurs, designers and so on. **AND THIS IS THE GAMECHANGER.**



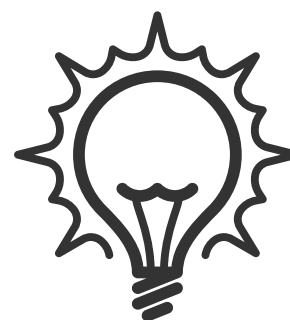
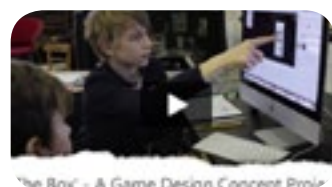
Step 2 Get Wired For Learning

Learning beyond our comfort zone is essential for Lights On Learning. We define success as the outcome of a lot of failing forward. So we need to build up emotional resilience to making mistakes. To do this we dive into the wonderful world of neuroscience and learn that frustration, set backs and failure are inevitable when we step towards the edges of our ability. It is important to go deep into understanding why moving towards a growth mindset is desirable whilst acknowledging we may always have a bit of a fixed mindset in us and that's ok.



Step 3 Switch On Their Lights

Now it is time to get active, hands on and producing some tangible learning outcomes. You now know the strengths of your learners, based around their own talents and interests, and so now project-based learning or real world learning (wherever you are on that scale) can really come into its own. To fully switch on their lights you need to give your learners the 'power' to produce work driven by their internal motivations. This is perhaps one of the most difficult steps in the beginning, but as you, yourself, are already embracing mistakes and overcoming your own fear of failure - you are going to jump in, get things wrong and model the attitude to learning you expect your child or learners to have - right? Once you've started there is no going back from the culture of Lights On Learning!



Step 4 Spotlight On Learning

So now we know our students' strengths and obstacles. We're all feeling brave, as we're wired to learn and we've dived off into the deep end with our first project. Enter the wonderful draft critique process! This is guaranteed to change everyone's view of what we are all capable of achieving. No one says it better than Oscar, age 6, whose journey through the process with us transformed his attitude to learning. The Impossible Triangle activity is fantastic in helping students go 'wow' at what they can do but also more importantly it proves they have sticking power, as they try to master the illusive illusion!

For you and your learners this stage is often full of lightbulb moments. So this is where we start to raise the bar of what we expect of ourselves.



Oscar's Impossible Triangle



Step 5 Reflections

Learning is never linear and we want to make that clear to everyone, including you! There will be highs, lows and plateaux. But the beauty of Lights On is that we build this into our approach. It is essential that everyone understands that it is ok to have your lights dim or off at times because amazing learning and lightbulb moments happen during these times. Some of my biggest breakthroughs (including the creation of this online course!) have followed my deepest dips. Click below to read my reflections on this. So this step in the system is fundamental and can't be overlooked. It can be hard to build reflection in but I promise you the value of moving your learners forward by doing it will be so tangible.



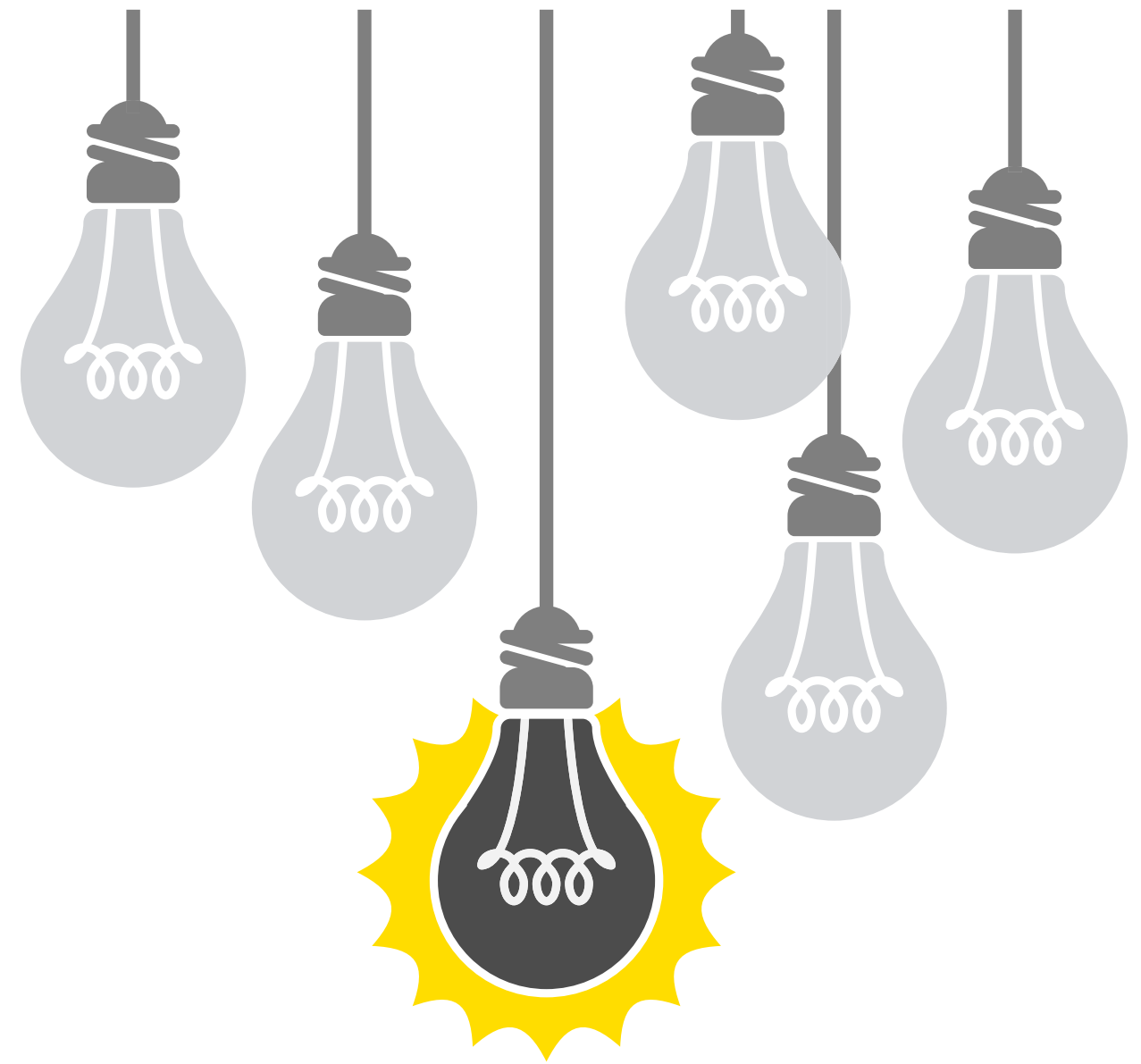
READ MY BLOG



Liking the sound of this?

Now let's go switch on some lights!

This is a quick reference point and introduction to my 5 step framework. Now it's time to dive in deeper and start understanding how transformative Lights On Learning can be.



Locate The Switch

The core ethos of Lights On is that EVERYONE has something that they are good at; in fact that they can be excellent at.

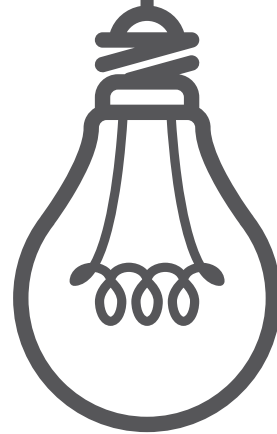
The problem isn't the absence of strengths or innate talents but the lack of time to explore, discover and experiment within that zone. So quite early in life our children can lose touch with what switches on their lights. This can have significant impact on their learning, their wellbeing, their family relationships and of course their future.

Our first step is to find that switch

If your children or learners could spend their time doing anything - what would it be?

When do they get completely focused in the moment?
When do they look engaged, motivated and lead their own learning? When do they lose track of time - in a good way?

In our experience children learning with their Lights On tend to be creating something tangible, using their hands and heads at the same time. We have seen definite groups emerge but this is by no means an exhaustive list.



So now we know what we're looking for...
how can we locate their switch?

Step 1

Start by asking them!
We are a big fan of brainstorms and you can learn a lot about a child from how they approach it. Some fill up the page with colour, drawings, words and are really clear and others may be a bit more reticent or say they don't really know. Finding out if they know is the crucial first step because once we Locate The Switch learning starts to be purposeful.

Step 2

Set up a learning carousel by putting out different activities for your children to do. You might layout some lego, paints, an animation station, cardboard, scissors and tape, pencils and paper and let them explore. You're looking to see if they land and settle at the same space everytime. Perhaps they roam but use the same kind of thinking and skills in each station? Perhaps they don't know where to begin or what to do at all.

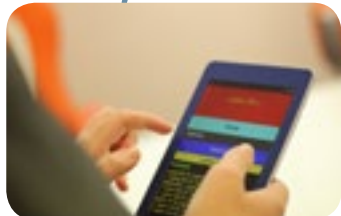
Step 3

Sit back and observe. I always tell my team that we are getting it right when we can stand back and delight in how much active learning is going on in our space without us needing to get too involved. Children who are in tune with their switch, are very active, self directed learners when given the opportunity so if a child is needing a lot of your time or input note when it is they ask for help. Is it when they get stuck? Is it for ideas in the first place? Or is it because they are hungry and don't want to stop what they are doing but need a snack?!!!

Everyone has their natural place that gets their Lights On. When our children are young they have much more freedom to be 'themselves' so it can be quite clear. As they move up through the school system they can start to lose the connection with their USP - Unique Success Point. Lights On is all about helping our children stay connected to what makes them 'them'.

So jump in and get started with Lights On Learning.

These 3 simple steps are designed for you to learn a lot about whether your children or learner's lights are easy to switch on or if you are going to need to go a bit deeper in the early days. Remember this is just the tip of the iceberg but have a go and let me know how it all pans out!



The Digital Wizards

They are happiest when creating and exploring with technology. They like learning on the fly and are comfortable solving problems through trial and error. This group could include coders, filmmakers, graphic designers to name a few and often they love using technology to be creative across a wide range of disciplines.



The Tinkerers and Engineers

They love making and creating something physical. This might be with lego, plasticine, cardboard or recycled bits and bobs - whatever it is they tap into their imaginations to think up ideas or inventions. They definitely like problem solving and are not afraid of getting things wrong because their curiosity often takes them into the unknown.



The Wordsmiths

Wordsmiths are always conjuring up stories and pouring words from their imagination straight on to the page. They have a love of telling stories and being playful with words and when young may be masters of imaginative play.



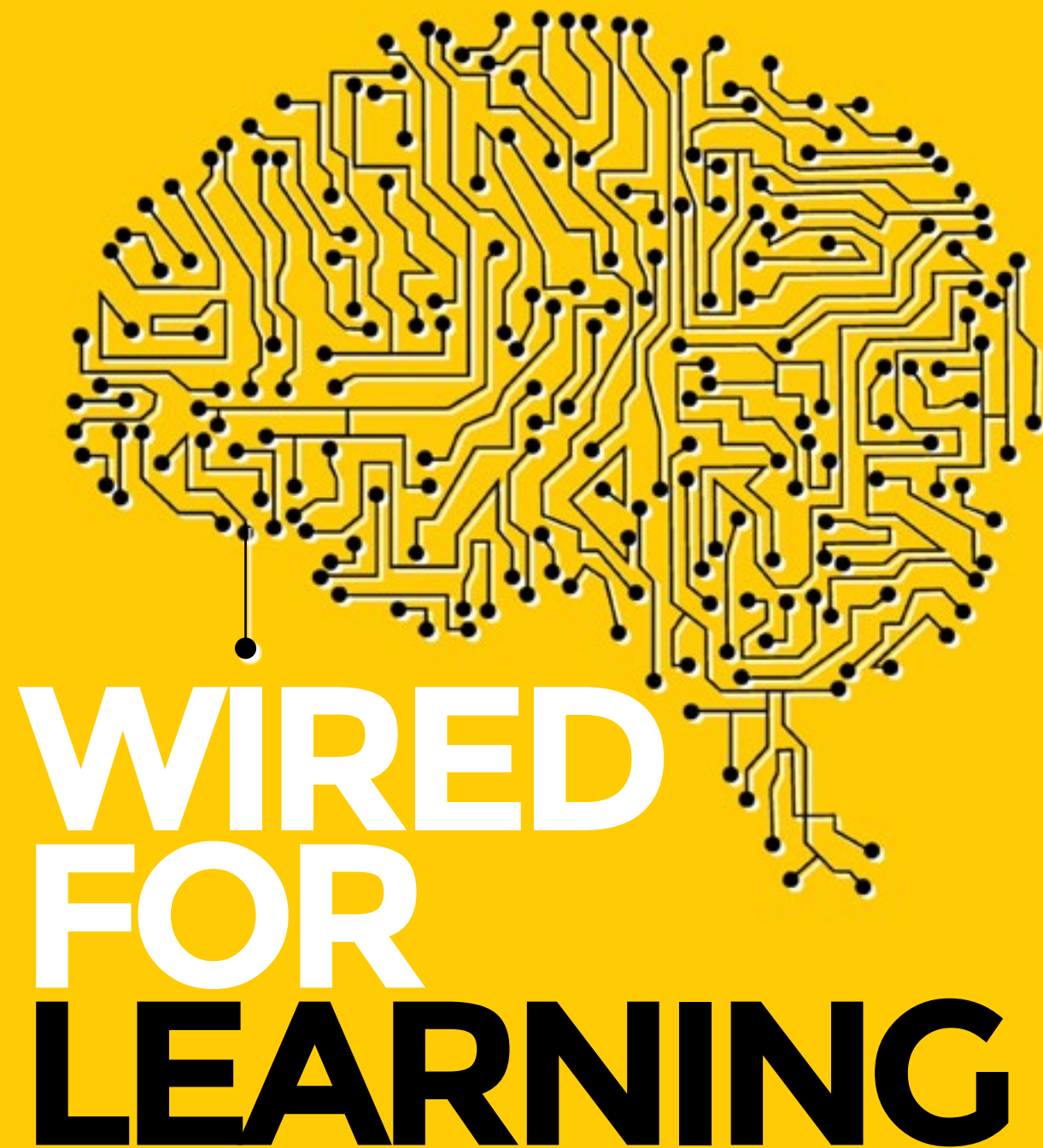
The Artists

This group love bringing their ideas to life through their drawings, paintings, collages or sculptures. They seek inspiration from the world around them, as well as their internal experiences and emotions and may already have their unique style emerging at a young age.



The Athletes

Athletes love using their mind and body together and therefore thrive in hands-on, active learning environments. They are often confident that sport is their passion and will do anything to be outside where they have the space to move around.



When we start to look at learning at a neuroscience level lots of things start to make sense.



First steps...

When we start to look at learning through neuroscience lots of things start to make sense. For the first time we can really understand why making mistakes and failing are so important.

One of the biggest obstacles holding our children back from embracing learning to the max is mindset. I know this has become a buzzword recently but Carol Dweck has been researching it for 20 years - it's just the rest of the world has finally caught up!

Imagine you are on a wonderful sandy beach (just to get us in the right frame of mind). The sun is shining and the sea is beautiful and clear - you choose the colour!

Now imagine the waves coming in and going out. Grooves in the sand start to appear and with each new wave some of the grooves get deeper as the water finds the route of less resistance. Now relate this visual imagery to our brains and neural pathways. When we do something over and over again our neural pathways become more established.

The myelin sheath around the neurons becomes thicker. Speeding up the rate the electrical signals travel down the neurons and trigger neurotransmitters across the synapses (point to point connection between two neurons). As the synaptic plasticity strengthens, the speed and efficiency that electrical signals travel through our neural networks increases.

This explains why we may try things over and over again and one day suddenly it all clicks into place. Like learning to walk as a toddler.

The big question is...

How do we get children Wired For Learning?

Step 1

Create the right culture for learning. Be explicit that you expect everyone, whatever their age, to make mistakes because that is a fundamental part of learning.

Make metacognition (thinking about thinking and learning about learning) an everyday habit. Our mindset towards learning is such an important part of Lights On.

Step 2

Get your children or learners to understand what happens to the brain at the level of the neurons and synapses. This also helps them to deal with some of the emotions around learning, particularly when they start to embrace mistakes and accept failure. This will become increasingly necessary, the longer they've been learning in a Lights On way.

Step 3

Use challenges designed to get children discovering the edges of their ability. These will offer a fun, creative and safe way for them to experience frustration and learn how to overcome obstacles in a short space of time. Learning how to cope with the full range of emotions that surround learning is essential.

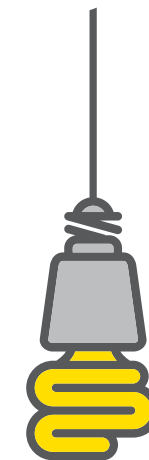


SWITCH ON THEIR LIGHTS

Time to delve deep into a learning adventure and start to make learning tangible.



Starting the adventure



So we've found out where your child's switch is located and been busy getting them Wired For Learning. We know much more about them as learners and so do they - which is the GAMECHANGER. So we need to get them to start on an open-ended exploration.

I suggest you start small but create space and opportunities for making mini mistakes. You don't want to start with something too easy but equally you don't want to be too ambitious that it feels too daunting.

The key to Lights On is all about making learning tangible. You want to be able to see the journey from initial brainstorm (remember how we love these) right through to end goal.

So what makes a successful project?

Step 1

Start with a clear brief. It could be based around an enquiry question 'How does the eye work?' Or more practical 'Design and build a bridge out of spaghetti.' Or perhaps start with a writing focus 'Using Van Gogh's painting 'Old Boots' imagine and communicate the story behind the boots.'

Let your child interpret the brief and see where they take it in their initial brainstorm.

Step 2

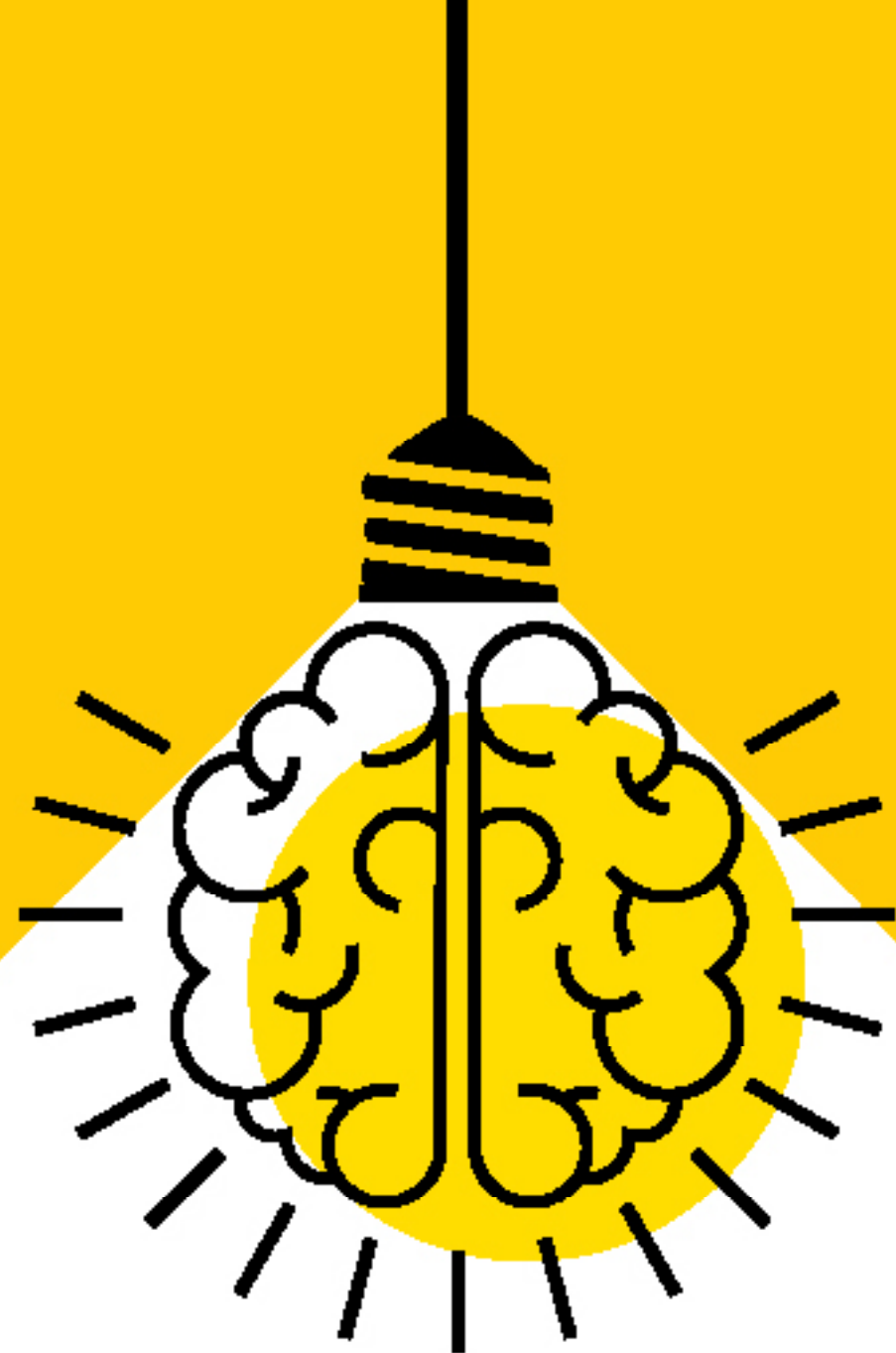
Help them make a plan for their first steps and then allow them to lead and self direct as much as possible. Guide them as and when they need it but don't be tempted to step in too soon. Observe how they respond at different stages through your Wired For Learning lens. Do they have a tendency to take the easy route? When it gets difficult do they start to lose interest and say they are bored? Do they get stuck right in solving the problem and persevere even through their frustration?

Step 3

We are huge fans of drafts. We want your child to amaze themselves and realise 'wow' look at what I can do. So it is important to let them know that you are not expecting their first piece of work to be their final piece. Over time as they get more familiar with Lights On Learning the quality of their first draft should improve dramatically.



In this video Seb shares how the draft critique process has developed him as a learner.



Spotlight on Learning

The Power Of Draft Critique.

Catching a glimpse of our potential



A year before I started Explorium my friend Alice told me to check out the work of Ron Berger. It changed my life. I realised he had shown it was possible for an ordinary child to achieve something extraordinary using a simple, but highly effective draft critique process. It confirmed my parental instincts that our children rarely get the time to show their full potential in our school system. Too often they are judged on their first draft, never having time to finish work or to care enough about it.

Lights On enables learners to continually take their learning to the next level through kind, specific and helpful advice about their next steps.



It was 6 year old Oscar who gave us our first really visual example of the power of drafts. Click above to watch his film.

Step 1

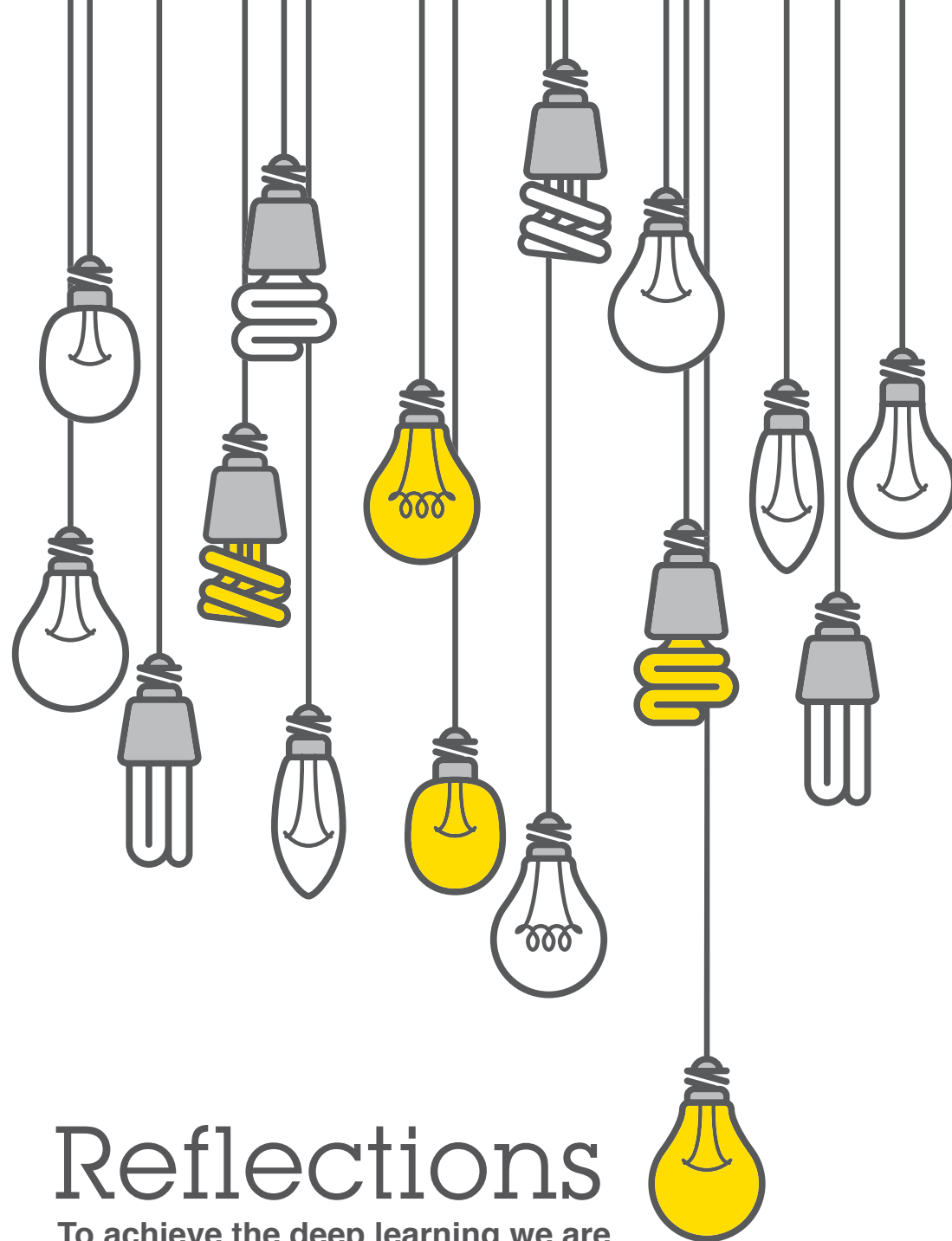
Start getting familiar with the draft critique process as soon as you can. This will be an integral part of your children's learning. You know when you have it right when they start to say, 'This is just my first draft'. This affirms the move towards a growth mindset where with practice, effort and persistence your children can 'wow' themselves and find that intrinsic motivation we are aiming for.

Step 2

Documenting work visually is really important. We found Google photos to be the best tool for our Digital Portfolios. This enables you to really see the distance travelled over a short space of time, and share the amazing adventure with family and friends. This helps to give a sense of audience. So start your child's Digital Portfolio straight away.

Step 3

As your child starts to gain confidence, and they are impressed by their own capabilities, it is time to start to build in a degree of challenge. Maybe they have become too comfortable and it is time to raise the bar for them a bit? I think of learning like a never ending ladder - no matter how high we climb, there is always another level to reach. Judging when the time is right will be your learning curve.



Reflections

To achieve the deep learning we are aiming for we need to build in time for reflection.

Our lightbulb moments

When pieces of the puzzle fit into place.

It is impossible to have our Lights On all the time and I am not sure we would want that. Learning encompasses a range of emotions; the highs and lows, the Lights On, dim and off moments.

When our lights start to go dim or begin turning off we can actually use that as an opportunity for growth. If we view these moments as big road blocks forcing us to navigate around the current situation then we can reframe them not as a dark, scary and lonely place, but as a time to question, to ask what am I meant to learn from this and to seek guidance and mentoring from others.

Reflection is crucial throughout Lights On Learning and as parents and educators we can learn to recognise the exact moments we should step in, step back or walk alongside our children.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Legitimise Lights Off and Lights Dim right from the offset. Without this your child might not be open to expressing their feelings when things start to get difficult as they learn out to their edges. If your child is starting out with their lights down pretty low then it is important to let them know that is ok. Our aim is to maximise the time with Lights On but use those darker moments to learn about ourselves.	Use the tangible evidence in your child's Digital Portfolio as a conversation point. Celebrate the successes and marvel over the distance travelled AND discuss what learning obstacles came up along the way. Even if your child has not reached a 'wow' moment through the draft process this is worthy of reflection. Did they always give up when it got too hard? How did they feel when you gave them a further challenge and they thought they were finished?	Try to get your child to write down some reflections and facilitate this if needs be. Put this in their Digital Portfolio alongside some of your own observations. Documenting reflections enables you to look back over time, and empower them to see how far they have come and how much active learning has been taking place.