HOW-TO GUIDE:

HOW TO S.E.R.F.

S — STRATEGIES

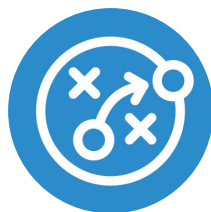## E — EFFORT

R — REFLECTION

F — FEEDBACK

Learning to **SERF** is *learning how to learn* effectively and independently. Supporting students to learn to seek and use the right **S**trategies, **E**ffort, **R**eflection and **F**eedback empowers them to better engage with new knowledge and skills in the classroom and beyond. Below we outline some key features to help students recognise and use the RIGHT Strategies, Effort, Reflection and Feedback and offer ways to introduce and use SERFing in the classroom.

Encourage students to understand that the right effort, feedback, strategies and reflection are the key to all learning, and the foundation of having/developing a growth mindset. You can encourage the class to go SERFing: "We need to use the right strategies, effort, reflection and feedback."

This easy acronym lends itself to:

- *"Let's go SERFing;"*
- *"Get SERFing;"*
- *"We need to SERF this;"*
- *"Come SERFing with me;"*
- *"Have your tried SERFing this?;" etc.*

STRATEGIES

How are you going to get across the Line of Opportunity? Or closer to Mastery?

Strategies are defined as a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. Learning strategies are the tools and processes that students can use to improve their capacity to engage and learn. Children and young people find their strategies from a variety of sources: past experience, peers, family, teachers, social media, TV, coaches, role models etc. Some are applied intentionally, but typically we resort to habitual responses and don't consciously reflect or seek feedback to determine how effective our strategies actually are.

We all need time to practice strategies for them to become familiar and an easy 'go to' choice. Consider the following questions and activities to help students gain mastery in the selection and use of strategies.

1. Building a strategy bank:

- Explicitly teach or brainstorm to identify a key list of strategies that serve general learning or specific subject areas. In addition to items such as review, seeking help, research, reading the question etc. this might include Reboot tools such as the Positive Change Highway (PCH) as a problem solving and goal setting tool, 5 Faces for self-regulation, getting centred, SERFing, reflecting on learning using the Quadrants of Engagement, understanding the brain etc. Create clear lists of possible strategies and reference them regularly.

- Have visual lists of explicitly taught strategies on the wall, anchor charts or in their books.

- Provide the time for students to work in groups on projects and problems and create their own strategies for success. Support them to reflect on what has worked and why a strategy may not have been successful.

- Break tasks into chunks and apply strategies to each Next Step.

- Have students ask questions of each other (using the white board, worksheets or in conversations) to share the strategies that they have used. Individual students can work with another in pairs or present problems to a group.

- Enlist students as a collective brain to "teach the teacher" and share their knowledge of strategies that work.

- Model the use of strategies clearly while teaching using a sample problem and provide the thought processes involved in a scaffolded manner.

- Create a 'yellow pages' for your class that identifies students who have a level of mastery in subject areas and can share this with others.

- Create a map of the problem solving process (PCH) identifying the Strategies that you have used to address various Speedbumps and Roadblocks.

2. Assessing the effectiveness of a strategy:

- Consider the following questions to encourage reflection:
  Did you get the outcome you were looking for? Did the strategy you used contribute to that success, and if so how? Would you use that strategy again? Or change it? Is there a better strategy you could have used?

- Can you teach me how you did it? What do I need to do to make it work for me?
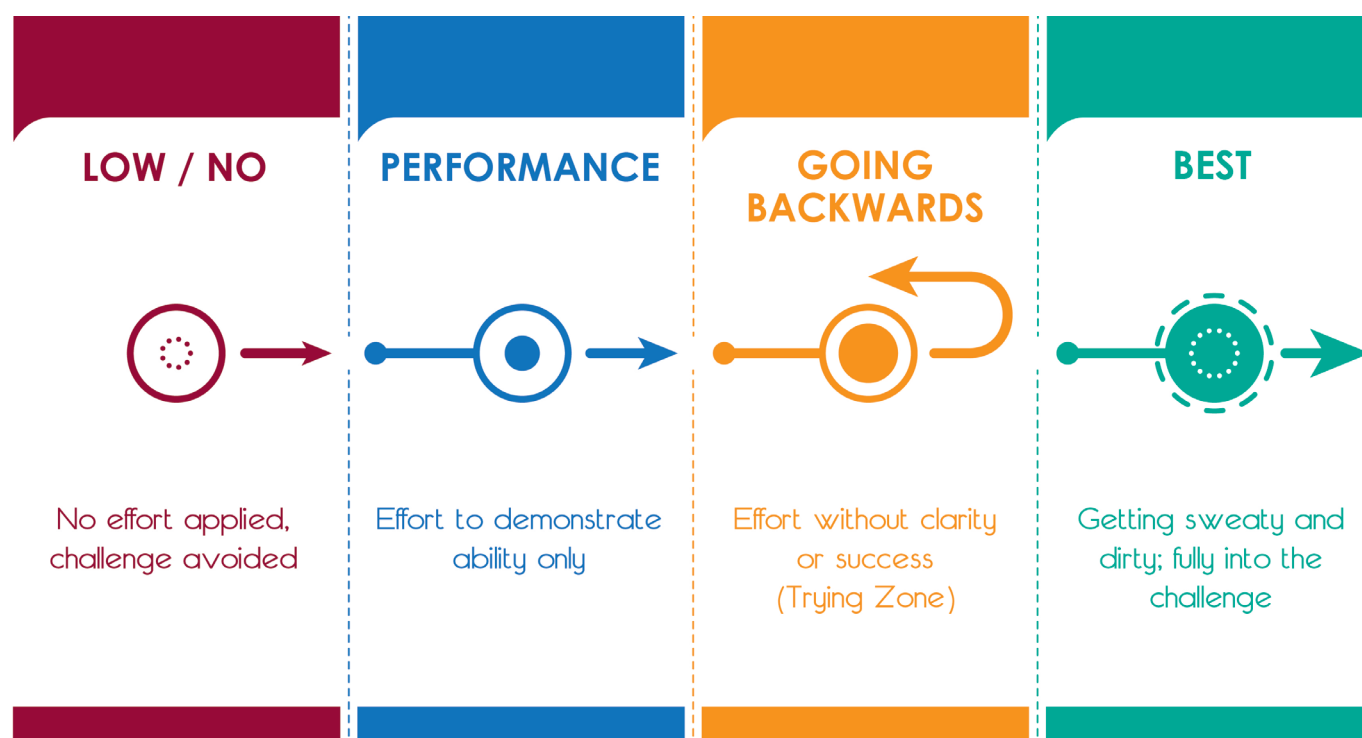
3. Applying a strategy:

- Use the Positive Change Highway to clearly identify the problem areas (Speedbumps and Roadblocks) and the role of strategies to support a student to move to the New Step. Ask: what are you trying to achieve or solve? What tools can you use to help you solve it? What will you need for this to be successful?

- Encourage a Growth Mindset to support students to give new strategies a go.

- Use the Quadrants of Engagement to demonstrate clearly how strategies help us to get over the Line of Opportunity.

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EFFORT

Have you sweated over learning this?

Not all effort is the same. Some of us spend as much effort avoiding a task as it would take to successfully conquer a learning challenge. Others fail to truly apply themselves and do just what is needed to 'pass'. To learn a skill or gain knowledge, or acquire the skill of learning itself, we need to invest ourselves in order to grow and develop as learners. In Reboot we divide effort into 4 categories:

LOW / NO	PERFORMANCE	GOING BACKWARDS	BEST
No effort applied, challenge avoided	Effort to demonstrate ability only	Effort without clarity or success (Trying Zone)	Getting sweaty and dirty; fully into the challenge

The first is **Low / No Effort**. and does not usually result in much intentional change. While there are various reasons why someone applies little or no effort, and regardless of the outcomes, the individual usually fails to develop their learning skills and tenacity.

The second form of effort is **Performance Effort**. This is the effort we apply in an exam, exhibition or performance space. Typically, people try to recall and present the best version of things that they have learnt. In this zone we do not invest our curiosity or engage with the love of learning for learnings sake. There is little creativity or innovation resulting from this form of effort. Unfortunately much of our education system is focused on performance effort and this can lead to a habit of comparing oneself to others and a Fixed Mindset regarding personal skill levels.

The third category is **Going Backward Effort**: a form of effort that is not guided by clarity or effective strategies. When we are applying Going Backwards Effort we are often in the trying Zone and although we may be expending a lot of hard work we still fail to make any clear gains. We are best to stop, reflect (possibly seek help) and select a new strategy and renew our efforts.

Finally, we have **Best Effort**: a state in which we are completely invested in the processes of exploring our learning task. Best Effort does require the investment of time and energy and a commitment to the learning process without certainty of outcomes. In Best Effort there might be failures and mistakes, but there is also a great chance of creativity and innovation.
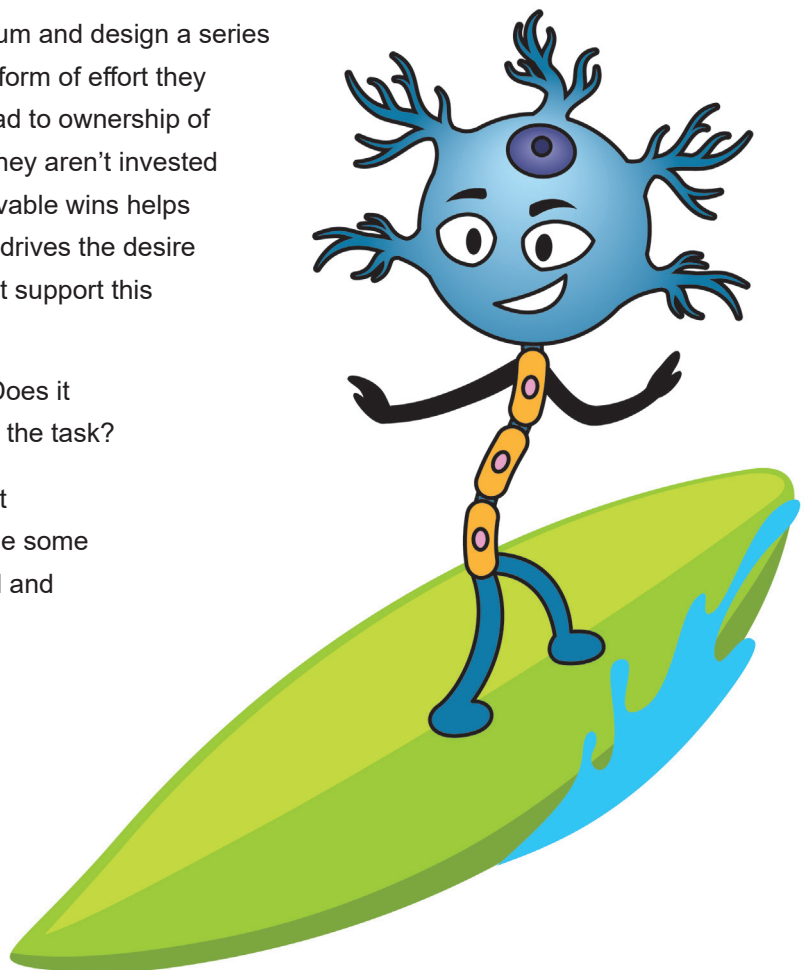
This is summarised as below:

KIND OF EFFORT	WHAT IT MEANS FOR LEARNING	HOW TO IDENTIFY IT
POOR OR NO EFFORT	Not much	No investment or time or focus
PERFORMANCE EFFORT	High levels of effort and focus in exam or exhibition conditions (using recall and attempting to get things right with little new learning)	High stakes with an outcome focus
GOING BACKWARDS EFFORT	Making lots of effort but not heading in the right direction	Often frustrated, repeating mistakes and appears to be 'getting nowhere'
BEST EFFORT	Intentional and deliberate focus on developing the next steps in knowledge or skills	Learner-focused intently on mastering the next step, maybe repetitive but aware and learning from mistakes. Creating new approaches to master difficulty.

Students can be introduced to the Effort Continuum and design a series of questions or reflection points to assess which form of effort they have been applying in a task. Negotiation can lead to ownership of their current levels of effort and that required. If they aren't invested ask why not. Encouraging small steps and achievable wins helps build motivation and a sense of self-efficacy that drives the desire to further invest effort. Some questions that might support this process include:

• Where are you on the Effort Continuum? Does it support where you want to be/your goal or the task?

It's important to acknowledge and celebrate effort (consider the **Wall of Awesome**) and also provide some stress management tools for those over-invested and about to combust.

REFLECTION
Which Quadrant am I in on my learning journey?

Reflection is a critically important skill effective to learn. Reflection offers a student a chance to observe themselves, integrate knowledge and relax (allowing creativity to spark.) Reflection is also a deliberate, intentional moment to review progress so far and how they are doing.

Unfortunately, many people fail to reflect and find themselves moving in circles and losing their confidence and sense of self-efficacy. Reflection can be explicitly taught and helps build metacognition of the learning process and empower students to make better future choices to move ahead. Consider providing a checklist of reflective tasks or questions at the end of a class, learning task or assessment item. Have students reflect on their understanding, the strategies they selected and the kind of effort that they used in the task and the relationship between these answers and their outcomes. Consider the following questions:

- What did you do? What strategies did you use?
- What worked or didn't work?
- What Quadrant are you in? Any progress from the start to the finish?
- Have you hit any Speedbumps or Roadblocks?
- What did you learn and what difference will this make for you?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What are your Next Steps?
- Do you need additional help or support to make this work better in the future?
- What sort of effort did you put in? (do you feel you put in?) If you put in less than best effort, why?

FEEDBACK
Am I being open to feedback?

Meaningful feedback refers to the effort, relates to the results, suggests opportunities for future growth and is personal. Feedback is key to learning and a big part of why learning is a relational practice. Good feedback requires the following:

- Asking for guidance on how to do it better next time.
- Being open: listening effectively not defensively.
- Applying or acting on the feedback (not just listening).
- Asking for feedback regularly but not so often that you don't take action, or use initiative.

Feedback can be very powerful if it supports a student to build their capacity to reflect. Concrete, specific feedback that provides a student with clarity empowers the individual to make new choices. The Positive Change Highway language and visual help provide effective feedback. It is also important to build critical literacy of who and what are a credible source of feedback.

- Who are you seeking feedback from? What kind of feedback do you get from people in the Trying or Survival Zones
- Did someone else determine success or failure for you? Would you agree?
- Where are you now? and what are your next goals?

See the **Effective Praise** section of the *Positive Change Highway how-to guide.*