

# Weaving a coherent curriculum

The big-picture vision of the *New Zealand Curriculum* says it is important to foster students' dispositions to learn and to contribute as active members of society. The key competencies directly support this vision. *NZC* describes them as "capabilities for living and lifelong learning".

## Rich tasks

⇒ bring together:

- concepts or big ideas (from one or more learning areas)
- appropriate aspects of all the key competencies (including the specific language, symbols and texts of the learning area).

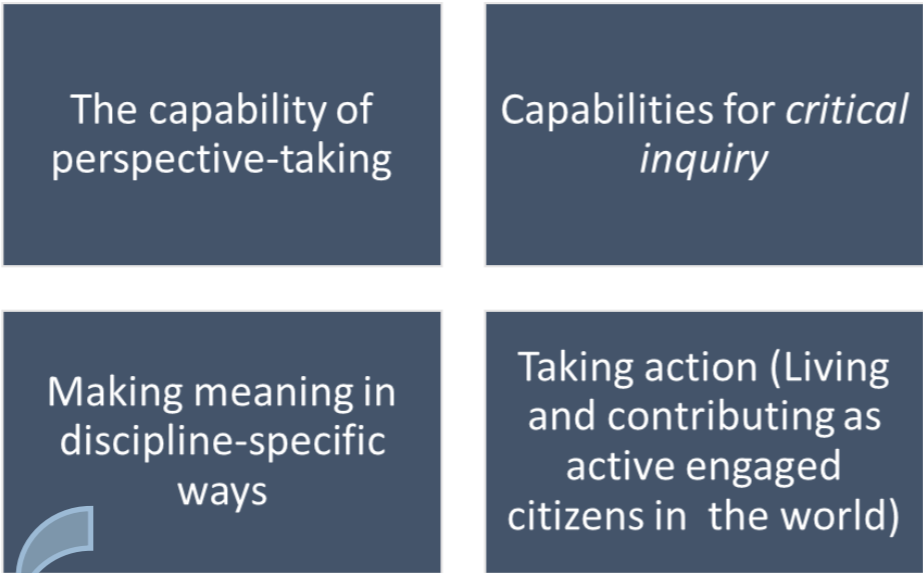
⇒ include a conceptual focus and a 'doing' focus.

Key competencies direct attention to students' ability to do something with the concepts they learn (from across all the learning areas). They help teachers think about purposes for learning—what it is important the students are able to do as a result of their learning.

A 'capability' is demonstrated in action. It is what the student shows they can do—and is willing to do—as a result of their learning. Capabilities *remix* aspects of all the key competencies and weave them together with important knowledge and skills.

Our aim is for learners to become capable in many different areas of their lives and their learning. There are so many important capabilities that we could never name and explicitly develop them all. Again, some focus is needed. A small number of really important capabilities is more likely to be kept 'in teachers' heads' as a guide for classroom actions and pedagogical choices.

Four types of capabilities that are particularly significant are shown in the boxes on the right:



- These types of capabilities are significant because they:
  - are important in all the learning areas
  - require students to draw on clearly identifiable aspects of at least two or three key competencies
  - bring the intent or purpose of the learning area to life by focusing on important learning area outcomes
  - help teachers to focus on students' dispositions to act in ways that allow them achieve success in their learning and that support students to be critical, informed and responsible citizens
  - can be taught and practised (all students can build and strengthen them).

## Making meaning in discipline-specific ways

Making meaning in discipline-specific ways requires students to take the 'perspective' of the discipline (for example, to think like a scientist, mathematician or literary critic). This is a complex and multifaceted type of capability that is essential for accessing the ideas of others, as well as expressing understanding and ideas, and creating ideas.

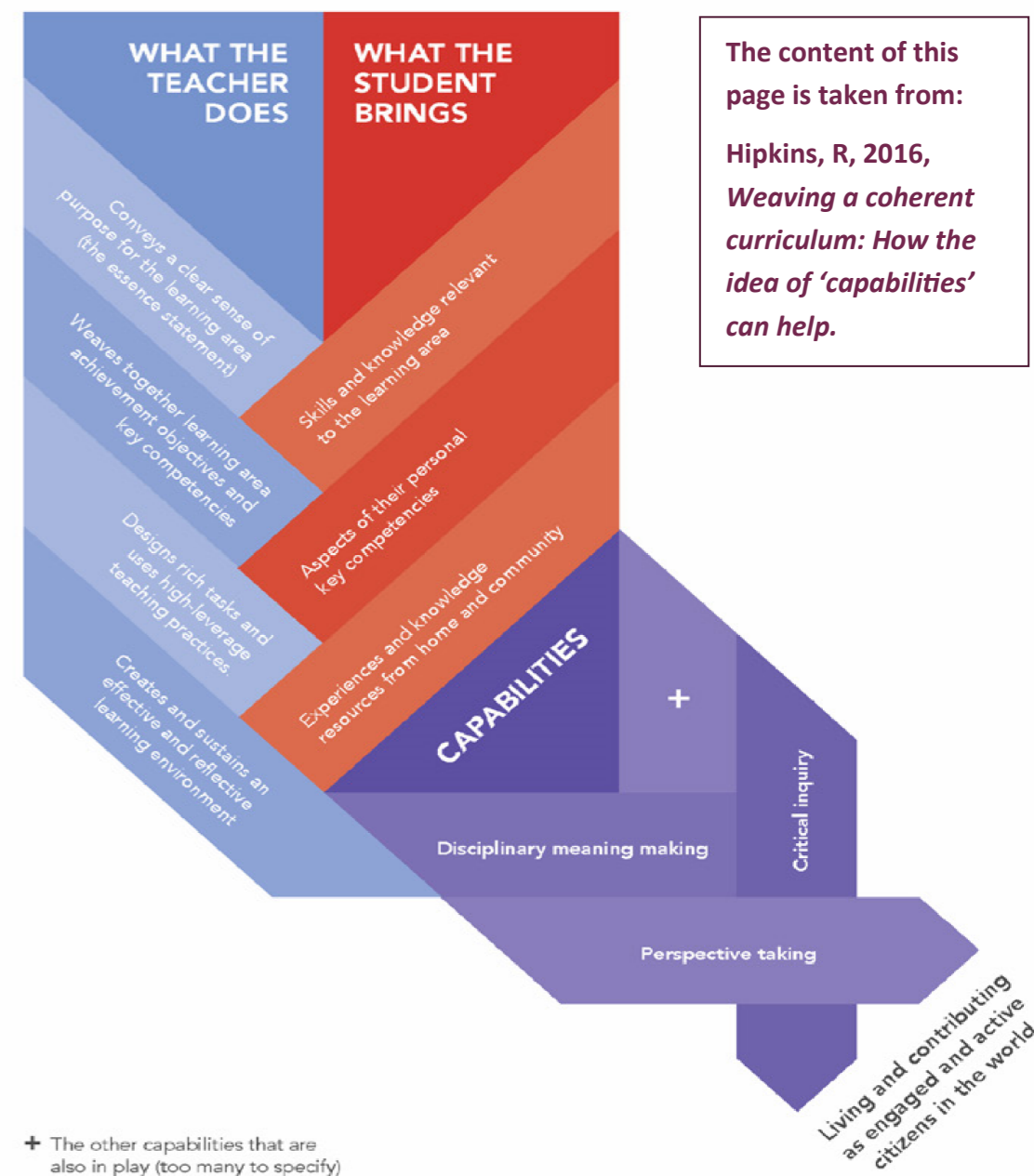
Each discipline area has its own specific ways of conveying meanings. These are sometimes called its 'discourses'.

*The New Zealand Curriculum* specifically mentions the key role these play in learning:

Each learning area has its own language or languages. As students discover how to use them, they find they are able to think in different ways, access new areas of knowledge, and see their world from new perspectives. (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.16)

As students learn to use these languages (or discourses) teachers might encourage them by saying they are 'reasoning like statisticians', 'thinking like historians', 'investigating like scientists', and so on. There are close links between discipline-specific meaning-making and critical thinking. For example, drawing inferences from different types of texts requires an understanding of the disciplinary practices used to create the texts. Another example might entail understanding the types of claims that can count as evidence in different learning areas.

# BUILDING CAPABILITIES



The content of this page is taken from:  
Hipkins, R, 2016, *Weaving a coherent curriculum: How the idea of 'capabilities' can help.*

+ The other capabilities that are also in play (too many to specify)