

# GETTING THE BEST OUT OF OUR STUDENTS: PROMOTING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

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As we progress our students towards being confident, articulate and credible learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need to take stock of how they learn and what their contribution is to the learning process.

In the past, IQ tests were considered the most reliable measure of an individual's intellect and success in the classroom and the workplace. It was thought that a high IQ score indicated a person's potential to succeed in the future. What we now understand is that intellectual intelligence (IQ) is usually **less important** in determining how successful we are than emotional intelligence (EQ).

We all know people who are academically brilliant and yet are socially inept and unsuccessful. **What they are missing is emotional intelligence.** Relatively recent research has revealed that emotional intelligence has a much greater influence on determining one's future. As teachers at KCAHS, we want our students to be successful and fulfilled. Developing students' emotional intelligence is an important aspect of our mission.

There are several significant teaching and learning challenges for schools today, and the strategic challenges seem to grow. Teachers are currently trialling a particular method of teaching based on the theory of emotional intelligence in the year 10, 11 and 12 ASKE/SLaM program. Our goal is to make sure students have the ability to:

- persist in the face of difficulty – resilience
- monitor their own feelings
- read others people's feelings
- get along with others
- take action that considers the needs of themselves and others

In essence, we want our students to be self-motivated, show empathy for others, control their impulses and create positive, social interpersonal relationships with their fellow students and teachers.

The specific skills which we wish to impart on our students are summarised on the following page. This list comes from a book called:

***Self Science: The Subject is Me***

*(second edition) by Karen Stone McCown et al. San Mateo, Six Seconds, 1998.*

- **Self awareness**

One of the basic emotional skills involves being able to recognise feelings and put a name on them. It is also important to be aware of the relationship between thoughts, feelings and actions. What thought sparked off that feeling? What feeling was behind that action?

- **Managing emotions**

It is important to realise what is behind feelings. Beliefs have a fundamental effect on the ability to act and on how things are done. Many people continually give themselves negative messages. Hope can be a useful asset. In addition, finding ways to deal with anger, fear, anxiety and sadness is essential: learning how to soothe oneself when upset, for example. Understanding what happens when emotions get the upper hand and how to gain time to judge if what is about to be said or done in the heat of the moment is really the best thing to do. Being able to channel emotions to a positive end is a key aptitude.

- **Empathy**

Getting the measure of a situation and being able to act appropriately requires understanding the feelings of the others involved and being able to take their perspective. It is important to be able to listen to them without being carried away by personal emotions. There's a need to be able to distinguish between what others do or say and personal reactions and judgements.

- **Communicating**

Developing quality relationships has a very positive effect on all involved. What feelings are being communicated to others? Enthusiasm and optimism are contagious as are pessimism and negativity. Being able to express personal concerns without anger or passivity is a key asset.

- **Co-operation**

Knowing how and when to take the lead and when to follow is essential for effective co-operation. Effective leadership is not built on domination but the art of helping people work together on common goals. Recognising the value of the contribution of others and encouraging their participation can often do more good than giving orders or complaining. At the same time, there is a need to take responsibilities and recognise the consequences of decisions and acts and follow through on commitments.

- **Resolving conflicts**

In resolving conflicts there is a need to understand the mechanisms at work. People in conflict are generally locked into a self-perpetuating emotional spiral in which the declared subject of conflict is rarely the key issue. Much of the resolution of conflicts calls on using the other emotional skills mentioned here.

As Ku-Ring-Gai Creative Arts High School moves forward and continues to engage students, teachers will be focusing on teaching the specific skills of emotional intelligence.

Instruction in emotional intelligence will not be a one-off lesson; it will occur through-out the year, once a week, during their ASKE/SLaM lesson. The benefits of this will only become obvious when students have the capacity for self awareness, understanding their learning processes and when we encourage them to use this understanding by being both proactive and reactive in different situations – to be responsible for their own and others' learning.

## REFERENCES

<http://www.eqj.org/mayer.htm>

Self Science: The Subject is Me (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) by Karen Stone McCown et al San Mateo, Six Seconds, 1998

<http://danielgoleman.info/topics/emotional-intelligence/>

<http://www.connected.org/learn/school.html>

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