

The Turton Community Touchstones

With the following questions in mind:

The stress of school is compounded, for many young people, by their inability to see the point of it. What is the purpose of education? Is it for the attainment of government targets, or is it to provide young people with the life skills to become confident learners and adults?

How do we coach students, effectively and systematically, in the habits and qualities of mind that will enable them to meet the demands of school and their futures?

The rate of emotional problems such as anxiety and depression has increased by 70% in adolescents. How do we address this?

We have thoughtfully explored the essence of what we provide for the students of Turton, which ensures that they are prepared for their futures and develop a sense of well-being. We feel that the following touchstones encompass our approach and reflect a common purpose for staff and students to embody.

Relatedness

*"There is a very important and fundamental relation between learning and personality development. . . . The two interact in a "circular process." Thus, mastery of symbol systems (letters, words, numbers), reasoning, judging, problem-solving, acquiring and organising information and all such intellectual functions are fed by and feed into varied aspects of the personality—feelings about oneself, identity, potential for **relatedness**, autonomy, creativity, and integration."* Biber 1961

In its simplest form relatedness is about how well we get along with each other. But the challenges of relatedness are in the depth of its impact on people's effectiveness. Some points for consideration are:

- Quality of relationships - staff and students tend to get along at Turton, but how often do staff use good quality relationships to motivate and engage kids? We have excellent examples of this but equally some staff misinterpret getting along as ignoring problems.
- Collaboration - for example, how well staff connect with the Turton ethos, or the usefulness of how they work together. Does collegiality have an impact on teaching and learning? Do staff trust each other enough to challenge and feedback to each other?
- Being a Global Citizen - here we need to consider the extent to which staff model and students develop compassion and empathy for others. For example, exploring the opportunities in lessons for students to experience and really understand diversity and difference.
- Positive influence - this extends right down to how students work together in lessons and influence their peers through working together, as well as looking at ourselves as leaders and the impact of our influence.

Community and Belonging

“Feeling connected to others, to caring and being cared for by those others, to having a sense of belongingness both with other individuals and with one’s community.”

“I am what I am because of who we all are.” “Ubuntu.” Nelson Mandela

Community comes from a shared purpose and collective vision. Our job is to create this and help everyone to feel connected to it.

Community provides safety, a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose and collective spirit, but there are huge opportunities for learning through community service. We already have many community service opportunities throughout school; however, by making the learning goals more explicit and focussed, we could ensure that community not only provides important safety and support networks but also provides an environment where students can experiment with group problem solving, conflict resolution, effective communication, project organisation, stress management and negotiations and compromise.

Community is the platform for developing responsible citizens by using the Turton community as a model for life beyond school. Issues such as race relations, environmental concerns, rights and responsibilities and wealth and poverty, can be raised.

In addition, community has to play a part in the working lives of staff, both in terms of their well-being and in terms of their classroom practice. On the one hand, staff morale and effectiveness are influenced by their connection to and feelings about the school community and their place in it. For example, developing focussed groups that are mutually supportive as well as providing a common purpose can improve performance. On the other hand, staff can enable students to develop important skills through including community service in their lesson planning.

Creativity and Expression

*‘My contention is that **creativity** now is as important in education as **literacy** and we should treat it with the same status.’ Ken Robinson*

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.” Einstein

“Schools kill creativity” Ken Robinson

Surely the whole point of education is to enable children to create themselves and to be able to express this creation effectively throughout their lives. Creativity and expression are about children developing the habits of mind, attitudes and skills needed to not just survive, but thrive beyond school.

Creative subjects have a huge role to play in developing students’ confidence and skills and helping them to discover their talents and abilities. But, in a sense, all

subjects are creative subjects, or at least they have a part to play in developing the following habits of mind through creativity and expression.

- Taking risks - intellectually and emotionally – seeing failure as a virtue.
- Curiosity – if you are curious and able to engage with new challenges and investigate them, you are more likely to expand your capacity to cope than if you are passive.
- Resilience – if you stick with difficult things and don't give up at the first hurdle, you are more likely to find a solution.
- Imagination – if you know how to balance your imagination and your logical mind, and to think with a mixture of creativity and clarity, you are more likely to come up with good ideas.
- Feedback – if you can ask for help and receive feedback without getting upset, you will learn faster than if you are defensive or self-righteous.
- Expansive thinking – if you develop a broad mind and can express your own values and principles as well as understanding those of others, you will learn the qualities of empathy, conflict resolution and the power of successful relationships.

There are various myths about creativity. One is that only special people are creative; another is that creativity is just about the arts; a third is that it's all to do with uninhibited "self-expression". None of these is true. On the contrary, everyone has creative capacities; creativity is possible in whatever you do, and it can require great discipline and many different skills.

Creativity, like learning in general, is a highly personal process. We all have different talents and aptitudes and different ways of getting to understand things. Raising achievement in schools means leaving room for these differences and not prescribing a standard steeplechase for everyone to complete at the same time and in the same way.

Self-Awareness

"We teach who we are" Palmer 1998

"Good teaching comes from the integrity and identity of the teacher; not methods and techniques" Guy Claxton

Well-being's first priority is satisfaction with personal relationships and a sense of purpose in life. Income and employment are secondary to this. Self-awareness encompasses the inter-personal skills and attitudes needed to achieve well-being and to develop personally and professionally.

Defining self-awareness is like trying to define 'love'; it is far reaching and all encompassing. In an attempt to simplify it, we should consider it from the edict of 'valuing all learners and treating them with dignity.' The dignity of the child is the purpose of the UNCRC and informs how we behave towards each other; however, this is much deeper and more challenging than being polite and cooperative. The following are points for consideration and form part of self-awareness and emotional intelligence.

Social ability – I can understand other people’s behaviour and I know how my actions make other people feel, having insight into people’s feelings and concerns.

- Optimism – a general feeling that things will turn out well leading to motivation.
- Dignity – teachers who see individuals and protect students’ dignity at all times; also students with a strong sense of their own dignity will become adults who can take risks, handle setbacks and act to protect other people’s dignity.
- Personal connection – the art of relationships, listening and empathy, reading people’s emotions and recognising and responding to people’s feelings and concerns.
- Negotiating solutions – the talent of the mediator, preventing or resolving conflict.
- Organising groups – the essential skill of the leader.
- Character – an awareness of how this affects our teaching style and how it affects students’ learning styles.

Self-awareness and social intelligence are crucial in defining how well we work with children, from how effectively we influence their learning and development of skills to how well we do at influencing their behaviour in and around school.

Seeing the good in others

‘Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.’ Dalai Lama

This is about our investment in staff and developing a professional learning culture in school.

- Trust – involves reliability, reaching shared understanding, trusting yourself so that you can trust others, effective delegation, providing professional growth and development, open communication, admitting mistakes, keeping confidences.
- Respect
- Compassion
- Empowerment and allowing people to be their best.
- Collegiality – how we share knowledge and expertise across school.

In sharing these principles and purpose with staff, we need to be mindful of how explicit we are, how frequently we re-iterate and define the language we use. For example, we need to be able to unpick a notion like resilience and make it understandable to everyone.