Learning Healthy Relationships

Abstract

Relationships and Wellbeing

The quality of our relationships is now recognised as being critical for wellbeing at home, at work and within our communities. Healthy relationships enhance a sense of connectedness, boost resilience and give us reliable alliance. Sharing the good times with others often enhances positive experiences, and having emotional and practical support makes the worst of times more bearable. Children and young people therefore need to learn the social and emotional values and skills that will enable them to live well with others: communicate effectively, be a team-player, be compassionate and ethical, manage conflict, support, value and include others, and be confident in resisting peer pressure.

Relationships are there in all aspects of our lives and are on a continuum from our most intimate and long-term relationships to passing friendships, role specific relationships, those in our communities and indeed those we have never met. How we perceive and position others who share our world, such as refugees, those from different cultures or another social milieu, make a difference to our expectations of the individuals we may come across, what we believe about them and how we treat them.

Relationships and Education

Although academic success opens doors and gives young people access to more choices, sustainable wellbeing does not lie in getting high test scores. You can be a successful A-plus student and live a miserable or shallow life if other things are not in place (Feinstein, 2015). You can also have a meaningful and enjoyable existence without being a high flyer at school.

Learning the values and practices of healthy relationships needs to be a core component of the educative process. Social and emotional knowledge and skills, however, cannot simply be taught

in a didactic lesson format. Children learn how to relate by watching others and listening to how they speak to and about each other, the values they espouse and how they demonstrate these. Their understanding comes from their own family members, teachers at school, the media and public figures on the television. Some of what they learn may be negative and unhelpful, especially in a culture that promotes individual success at the expense of collaboration and empathy.

This chapter covers both content and pedagogy in teaching relationships and how this needs to be embedded within a whole school process. The pedagogy is summed up in the Circle Solutions approach that helps to ensure that social and emotional learning (SEL) is a safe and positive experience for everyone, not 'therapeutic education' (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008). It is critical that SEL is an intervention for whole classes as research indicates that teaching social skills in small groups to students who lack these does not lead to sustainable outcomes. Once those individuals return to their usual classes, other children reinforce earlier behaviours, as their perceptions have not changed (Frederickson, 1991). Having a universal approach also addresses the understanding and behaviours of those who look as if they are socially skilled but interact in ways that are self-serving or manipulative. This is demonstrated in some bullying behaviours.

The Twelve Dimensions that are briefly addressed in the latter part of this chapter build on the CASEL framework of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and decision-making. They separate out some aspects for greater clarity such as dealing with conflict and repairing relationships but also broaden the concept to include the promotion of social justice, human rights, spirituality and finding meaning. This framework also explores what contributes to a congruent educational setting for each of these dimensions.

An Appropriate Pedagogy for Relationship Education

According to the Delors Report (1996) there are four pillars of education, 'learning to know', 'learning to do', 'learning to be' and 'learning to live together'. Although you can teach the knowledge and skills that make up the core of the curriculum with an informative, instructional pedagogy, social and emotional learning requires a different and more subtle approach. Simply

telling students how they 'should' be in the world and how to relate to others will have limited impact. They need a pedagogy that is experiential (doing things), interactive (doing things together), discursive (talking about what you are learning), reflective (thinking about what this means) and safe (not intrusive).

When children and young people have multiple opportunities to consider their own needs, how they want to be treated, and what makes them feel good about themselves and others, they begin to understand how they need to relate to others. When they work alongside peers who are not necessarily within their own social circle they make connections on what is shared rather than differences. When they try out alternative ways of being, and are asked to reflect both on what they feel and what they have learnt, they realise that they have choices and what might be involved in making a 'good' choice. When they see their teachers model emotionally literate behaviour, they learn by watching and hearing as well as by doing. When they are given opportunities to practice the skills they have learnt these eventually become a way of being that goes beyond the theoretical.

The Importance of Process in Group Interactions

Circle Solutions is a value- based philosophy and a pedagogy for practice in learning relationships. It builds on other similar interventions, such as the yarning circles in Aboriginal culture, learning circles, magic circles, quality circles, tribes and circle time. It has been developed not simply as a stand-alone intervention but as a tool for wellbeing and healthy relationships. In a school context students spend regular structured sessions with each other in a Circle format but their learning relates to how they interact the rest of the time. The same framework can be used whenever there is a group process: in staff meetings, working with families, community consultations, policy and practice discussions or student representative councils. It gives everyone a voice and addresses the often unspoken process issues that determine whether or not a gathering or meeting is constructive.

The facilitator as a full and equal participant in proceedings and engages in all discussions and activities. He or she is responsible for ensuring that the Circle is run according to the foundational ASPIRE principles. Every Circle begins with a statement of the guidelines:

- What you have to say is important, so when you speak everyone else will listen to you - this means you also need to listen to others.

- You do not have to say anything if you don't want to - it is OK to just pass

- There are no put-downs.

Participants are regularly mixed up so they talk and work with everyone. Although each person has a say, the focus is not simply on individual contributions but on exploring commonalities, devising ways forward and group responsibility for outcomes. The emphasis is on strengths, solutions and constructive dialogue.

The ASPIRE Principles

The ASPIRE principles for healthy relationships are Agency, Safety, Positivity, Inclusion, Respect and Equality. These summarise the common threads in the 17 chapters of *Positive Relationships: Evidence based practice across the world* (Roffey, 2012). Here we give a brief overview of the definition and rationale for each of these and examples of how educators might engage students in putting these into practice.

Agency

Self-determination is a facet of authentic wellbeing. Having some control over what happens stops you feeling a victim of the actions of others (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Agency is also about responsibility for taking action. It happens when a teacher uses their authority to empower students to make decisions rather than tell them what to do. When students are given opportunities to build an emotionally positive class environment with others they are more likely to adhere to agreements. Rather than having rules imposed they decide how they want to 'live together' and agree a set of guidelines. This can be done in stages or in one exercise, and can be applied in developmentally appropriate format for all ages.

Staged approach: All students are mixed up, usually in a game. A simple one is 'silent statements' where participants: "stand up and change places if … - you had breakfast this morning, - you watched the match last night - you have a younger sister". Students then work in pairs with someone they were not originally sitting with. They discuss questions such as "what makes you feel good about coming to school", and are asked to come up with two statements they agree apply to both of them. Each person says one thing back to the whole Circle and ideas are collated. A small group puts these ideas into class guidelines that summarise what people will do rather than not do. The following week the guidelines are put on the wall and students are asked to stand up and change places if they agree with each one as it is read out. Those who disagree are asked to work together to come up with something better. The agreed guidelines stay on the wall.

Single game approach: Students work in groups of four to devise a recipe for a safe and happy class. They think about the ingredients, how to put them in place and how they will know when the recipe is properly 'cooked'! What does a safe and happy class look like, feel like and sound like?

During the year, should issues arise that challenge the class being supportive of each other, students again look to the positive to find solutions that work for everyone.

Safety

There are many issues in children's lives that they need to reflect on, but to talk about highly personal matters in a universal setting may not only make people feel uncomfortable, it can breach confidentiality. Such concerns may need the support of an individual intervention, such as a counselling session. Participants in Circles therefore only ever discuss issues, not incidents. Discussing events that happen in the class or school-yard inevitably leads to naming, blaming and shaming and is not helpful. The following strategies are impersonal but address issues that matter.

Using the third person in sentence completions rather than the first person - e.g. "Someone might be angry if …".

- Pair shares - discussion about what partners have in common and giving feedback together: "We agree that we both feel we belong when …".

- Using stories to stimulate discussion, such as William and the Worry Wart.

- Games that encourage conversation on meanings – e.g. groups making a statue (moving or still) that represents a certain emotion and then asking others to guess what this is.

- Symbols cards: these are laid out in the Circle, and students are asked to choose one that represents for them a particular quality, such as trust, gratitude or optimism. They then discuss their choice with a partner or small group reminding them to only say what they feel comfortable with.

- Photos or other pictures are also excellent prompts for reflection on social and emotional values. There are many commercially produced cards (see Resources at the end of this chapter) that enable young people to talk about a wide variety of emotions, what might have happened for someone to feel that way, how different emotions are embodied and how we might express or change these. This can lead to rich, productive conversations that maintain distance and safety.

Here is another example that can be used with young children.

Sad Ted: The Circle facilitator introduces a Teddy and says he is very sad today. Children are asked to think about why he might be sad and then complete the sentence: "*Teddy might be sad because …*". When the sentence has gone around the Circle the facilitator points out that the children have shown that there are many reasons for being sad: "*We all feel sad sometimes. It is OK to feel like this*". This activity 'normalises' difficult emotions and is a way of promoting resilience. In future Circles, children can be asked in small groups to think about how you might be able to tell someone is sad, what might cheer them up and what we could do in this class to help someone who is sad.

Trust is a strong relational value that is easily broken. Children often have to cope with adults not being reliable, promising what they do not deliver. It is important that children are given opportunities to reflect on this but in impersonal, safe ways. Circle activities could include pairs discussing these statement stems and finding what they agree on:

- "Being let down would make someone feel …"

- "You know you can trust someone when …"

Safety is also supported by the application of choice - you do not have to speak if you don't want to. Experience indicates that people will speak when they feel safe, confident and that they have something to contribute.

Positivity

Being both strengths and solution-focused, Circle Solutions is based on the burgeoning knowledge found in many branches of positive psychology. There are many ways Circles can help students identify, develop and find ways to use their own strengths and recognise these qualities in others. Dweck (2006) has highlighted the importance of helping children avoid a fixed mindset where they believe they either have a particular ability or not. When identifying strengths, therefore, it is more useful for participants to explore who they are 'becoming' and making choices about this. This promotes a 'growth mindset' and the possibility of change and optimism for the future.

It is easy for anyone to develop negative perspectives on others so students actively identifying the strengths in their classmates is a valuable exercise.

> **Perspective Glasses:** The class teacher keeps a selection of cheap and cheerful spectacle frames in a box on the desk, the lenses having been removed. Each pair represents a strength, for example Good Listening, Good Sport, Leadership and so on. When a teacher notices that a student is demonstrating a particular strength they are allowed to wear those particular frames for the rest of the morning or afternoon. As they look through the glasses they identify other students who are showing the same strengths.

> **Acknowledgements:** This is for a whole staff group. Participants attach a piece of paper with masking tape to each person's back. Using a medium sized felt pen they write anonymous statements about what they value about their colleagues. Each person ends up with 10 statements and the activity is not complete until everyone has ten. Participants are then given time to read what has been written about them, reflect on how this makes them

feel about themselves and their colleagues. They then make connections with what their students need. This is a powerful example of experiential learning.

Positive emotions promote an effective climate for learning: they not only enable students to focus but they also facilitate creativity and problem solving (Fredrickson, 2009). Positive emotions include a sense of belonging, feeling valued, safe, comfortable, cared for, accepted, respected and loved. Positive emotions are also experienced in moments of exuberance, excitement and shared humour. Laughter releases oxytocin into our bodies - the neurotransmitter that makes us feel good. This promotes connectedness and resilience. Shared humour in Circle sessions is one reason why students love them. They also respond positively to the playfulness that is embedded in many of the activities (Hromek & Roffey, 2009).

All emotions are highly infectious - we have mirroring neurons in our brains that make us 'catch' what other people are feeling. A very simple activity is passing a smile around. Although this begins as a fixed smile by the time it has travelled around most people are smiling naturally.

Inclusion

Feeling that you belong is one of the most important factors in resilience and psychological wellbeing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). SEL cannot just be for the 'good' kids but is for everyone. Circles provide an opportunity for students to think about themselves differently but also change perspectives of each other.

The expectation is that everyone will work with everyone else. Participants are mixed up several times in a session so they are sitting next to a different person each time. This breaks up cliques, helps people get to know those they would not otherwise communicate with, and facilitates new understanding and perspectives. This happens most actively when pairs are looking for things they have in common, even if this is not anything of any depth.

Social Bingo: Each person is given a piece of paper containing up to 9 squares. They have to find someone different for each square with whom they have a particular experience, interest or preference in common: Suggestions are:

- Someone who likes the same food as you

> - Someone who has the same pet as you
>
> - Some who has the same position as you in your family
>
> - Someone who has been to the same place as you - local or further afield

It is the most vulnerable children in our communities who are most likely to be marginalised, suspended and excluded from school. It is up to everyone, including other students to make sure that they feel they belong.

> **Walking in the shoes of others:** The Circle facilitator asks for a volunteer to role model a character. They are given one of following scenarios (or the teacher might make up another one) and asked to sit in the centre of the Circle and read them out. They are asked to stay in character. The rest of the Circle work in groups of three on the following questions:
>
> - How would this person feel?
> - How might you feel if this was you?
> - What would you want to be happening?
> - What 3 things could this group do to help this student feel included?
> - What else might help?
>
> The person acting the character remains in the Circle to answer any questions the groups might ask and then responds to the ideas that the groups come up with.
>
> *My name is Banti – I do not always understand what I am asked to do because I only started to learn English a couple of years ago. When I make a mistake other students laugh and I feel stupid. I have decided not to speak in class and sometimes will not answer questions in case I get it wrong. This gets me into trouble with some teachers.*
>
> *My name is Charlie – I have only been in this class a few weeks. My mum and I used to live in another town but we had to leave to get away from my dad who broke my mum's arm. I am very angry with everything and also scared for my mum. Most people in this class have known each other a long time. When I try and join in they are not very friendly towards me. This makes me even angrier. Things are going from bad to worse.*

> *My name is Savannah – I have a problem with my foot which means I walk lopsided and run slowly. I really like playing games but no-one wants me in their team. I often spend playtimes on my own.*

Some students may not have good role models for healthy relationships and others may be tolerated rather than loved. Young people who do not behave in acceptable ways may be given the message that things are better when they are not there. In Circles the aim is to meet the basic protective factors of connection, belief in the best of someone and high expectations. This means that participation is always a choice but pupils need to abide by the guidelines. If they decide to leave they can always return so long as they demonstrate listening and respect. The first thing any adult needs to say is: *"you are important, we want you here, it is not the same without you"*. These are words that some young people rarely hear.

Respect

Respect is a value often cited in the mission statements of schools and other organisations but not necessarily borne out in practice. Part of this is a problem with definition. It was not so long ago that 'respect' was accorded to role and position in society with the counter picture of 'respectful' meaning knowing one's place (Roffey, 2005). This is no longer a commonly held definition. Egan (2002) explores what is meant by respectful practices and includes the following: the exhortation to do no harm, not rush to judgment and not overpower a person's agenda with your own. Respect in this context is accorded as a human right, not awarded in response to power, attainment or quality of character.

Respect is built into the Circle process by listening to each other - not interrupting, talking over or having private conversations - and not putting people down, either verbally or non-verbally. Respect is not just about listening but also in what in said to others and what is said about others. The social capital that builds trust and mutual support in any relationship, including within a whole organisation, is found in the micro-moments of high quality interactions (Dutton, 2014) This includes greetings, acknowledgements, making requests rather than demands, showing interest, talking up strengths and sharing gentle humour. It also includes constructive conversations about others that do not make quick judgements.

The following activity has been developed to help young people realise how easy it is to decide what someone is like on limited, often surface information.

> **Envelope Game:** This is suitable for students from middle primary through senior school. Small groups are given an envelope with a picture of an object on the front. The gender and age of the owner is the only information written on the envelope, e.g. 'This bike belongs to a boy aged 12'; 'This lunch-box belongs to a boy aged 6'; 'This friendship bracelet belongs to a girl aged 10'. Groups are asked to think about the owner and what they might be like. They are then asked to take out 5 statements from the envelope one at ta time and see whether each confirms or challenges their original thinking. Examples of statements are: 'He has a hearing impairment', 'He speaks three languages', 'The friend who gave her the bracelet is now friends with someone else and ignoring her'. Groups are asked to think about the challenges there might be in this person's life and what they have learnt from this activity.

Respect includes acknowledging others - not just by name but noticing what they have achieved and contributed. A very simple activity that is applicable to many ages is this sentence stem going around the Circle: 'I would like to thank you for …'. Participants will need to have a moment or two to think about what they will say to the person sitting next to them.

Respect for cultural diversity is found in both verbal and non-verbal messages. When young people learn or work in institutions that do not represent people from their own community, do not find them represented in the media and hear informal conversations that belittle their life-style or practices, it is unsurprising they find it hard to show respect for the dominant culture. What is written on walls, in policy documents and newsletters matters for whether communities feel acknowledged and respected, both in what is said and what is omitted.

Equality

When everyone has the opportunity to participate in activities and there is no individual competition there is no hierarchy of winners and losers. The ability of a facilitator to participate fully and be on the same level as everyone else is a critical skill. It is the difference between being in charge of proceedings and being in control of people. Teachers have commented how

much they have learnt about their students by joining in and how being on the same level has often changed relationships within the whole class or group. Circles give *all* students an authentic voice, not just the natural leaders. Everyone has an opportunity to have their say, however briefly. Young people who have been silenced or have little control in their lives might shout to be heard, sometimes not just with words but also with challenging behaviours. When students are seen as disruptive we may shut these voices down. When pupils are not used to being taken seriously they can behave in silly ways at first. This soon stops when they know their turn will come to have their say.

We know that the more equality in a society the greater the wellbeing for all (Wilkinson & PIckett, 2010) Therefore, alongside the important value of freedom is the equally important value of responsibility. Rights and responsibilities are two sides of the same coin. Working out what is fair can be complex but children need to learn how to balance their rights with the rights of others.

What is fair? Give small groups of students one of the following scenarios and ask them to discuss and suggest a solution. Share the outcomes with the Circle.

Scenario for Young Children

Your friend has come over to play. He wants to stay inside and watch a cartoon.

You want to go outside and play in the garden.

 How can you work this out so everyone is happy?

Scenario for Middle Primary Children

You would love to have a dog.

Your parents think that having a dog would be too much work and cost.

What conversation might you have with your family?

Scenario for Senior Students

> Medical Associations want health warnings of foods with high sugar content as they damage health.
>
> The Food industry wants to sell as many products as they can and thinks that this would reduce sales.
>
> What are the issues here? What decision would you make and why?

Content and Context for Learning Relationships

Most people refer to the CASEL framework when discussing social and emotional learning. (Durlak et al, 2015). These are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and decision-making. The 12 dimensions given here (Table 1 and following) are simply a development from this separating out some aspects for clarity and extending others to address issues of meaning and social justice. It also addresses a whole school context for congruence. This has come about through perceiving schools as ecologies (Roffey, 2008, 2010). What happens in one part of the organisation impacts on others in a bi-directional, circular and accumulative process. In order to address SEL effectively the whole school needs to be engaged in healthy relationships

Twelve Dimensions of SEL.

Self-awareness is similar to the CASEL model with a focus on the identification of values and beliefs as well as strengths. People tend to act more on the basis of how they believe the world works and themselves in it than they do on evidence.

A school or any other organisation that values healthy relationships will ensure that 'learning to be' and 'learning to live together' have equal priority with 'learning to know' and 'learning to do'. (Delors, 1996)

Emotional awareness: This is a pre-requisite to self-management. It addresses the biological . neurological aspects of emotion that are more hard-wired but also cultural triggers. We are not all proud or embarrassed by the same things - they are culturally determined.

There is now a strong body of evidence (Reyes et al, 2012) on the value of a positive emotional climate for optimal student engagement - promoting factors that enhance this makes sense for both learning and relational outcomes.

Emotional skills.   This is divided into developing a language for emotion so that individuals can be articulate and more specific in describing how they feel, how to change what they feel in safe ways and promote factors that enhance resilience and emotional health

Staff wellbeing is aligned with student wellbeing (Roffey, 2012a). When adults are feeling stressed and under-valued they are less likely to provide emotionally literate models to students.

Shared humanity: High level social skills can be manipulative and self-serving. This dimension actively values our unique individuality but also seeks what people have in common. As human beings who share this world more unites us than divides us.

In schools this dimension is mirrored in how diversity is valued. The APA report on Zero Tolerance policies (Skiba et al 2006) shows that this can lead to authoritarian teacher-student relationships and concludes that schools need to promote a sense of belonging and connectedness across all the communities a school serves.

Interpersonal skills: We do not have to be best friends with everyone, that is unrealistic, but knowing how to be friendly opens doorways to deeper relationships and friendliness is a useful skill to have in many walks of life. Positive personal communication is a skill that some may be losing with the advent of social media and the busyness of everyday life.   Students need opportunities to practice conversational skills, including active listening. Activities that require feedback from partners about what the other has said help hone these listening skills.

Thousands of communications happen every day within a school and it is these that either promote high social capital or a toxic environment. How and what is communicated?   Are positive comments routine or rare? Is the school a 'no put down zone' in the classrooms, staffroom, offices and corridors and does this apply to everyone?

Situational skills: This is where empathy lies. It is being able to have an understanding of someone else's situation, put yourself in their shoes and imagine what that might mean.

Situational skills are also related to the importance of timing in relationships - an issue that is rarely addressed and can be critical for a positive outcome.

What happens in a school to take account of the fact that some students (and staff) will be experiencing adversity? Are there support systems in place and are adults aware that validating the emotions of students can support more positive behaviours? (Roffey, 2011)

Leadership: This dimension is where goal-setting, decision-making and self-confidence lie. It is more about being a leader in your own life rather than being in charge of others.

Within a whole school are those in authority aimed at controlling others or empowering them? What opportunities are there to given everyone a say in what happens. This is linked to the ASPIRE principle of agency.

Promoting the Positive: This dimension for SEL can be integrated across many others but is particularly focused on the relational factors that are known to promote resilience. This includes acknowledging positive qualities and bringing out the best in people - but also being able to have fun and laugh together.

Students value teachers who make learning actively enjoyable. They like cooperative and project based activities and the use of a wide range of technological approaches. What are the range of pedagogical frameworks available to enhance student engagement? And what happens to enhance collegial relationships?

Conflict and confrontation.   It is comparatively easy to establish a positive relationship but harder to manage when there are conflicts. This dimension explores skills of negotiation and compromise. Rather than being overwhelmed by relational differences students need to know there are options available when a confrontation arises. Individuals can either be submissive to the demands of another, be oppositional and aggressive or state their position calmly and ask for what they want - being prepared to take account of someone else's position. Rather than positioning intransigence and inflexibility as 'being strong' it is 'appropriate assertiveness' that is defined here as a skill and a strength. Students learning about healthy relationships need opportunities to debate alternatives. They also need to consider whether self-respect lies in dominating others.

Policies and practices across a school can limit conflict by establishing clear expectations for positive social behaviours. There are also skills involved in de-escalating confrontation that staff can learn and model to young people.

Repair and restoration: None of us are perfect and we all make mistakes. Acknowledging this is critical, not only for relationships but also for mental health. Aiming for perfection can leave individuals feeling constantly anxious about how they measure up.

In schools mistakes need to be accepted as part of learning with an expectation that individuals will admit when things have gone wrong and be able to apologise for any hurt caused. Restorative approaches have much to offer so long as they are embedded within a strong relational framework within a school.

Ethics and integrity This dimension aligns with the higher level strengths about who you choose to be in the world. It is based on the Golden Rule - do as you would have others do to you and includes behaving within a set of principles that honour this - being honest, reliable, consistent and making decisions that take into account the rights of others. Children from an early age understand the concept of fairness but as young people grow and develop this dimension demands deep reflection on the complexities of ethical behaviour and what this means for personal integrity.

Many schools are now incorporating ethics education or philosophy for children into the curriculum. This dimension also challenges schools to explore the extent to which their policies address human rights.

Spirituality and meaning: One of the pillars of authentic wellbeing (Seligman, 2011) is having meaning and purpose in life. This dimension encourages young people to both appreciate the magic and mystery that is life itself but also to see themselves as part of the bigger picture. Life is not just about acquisition and subjective wellbeing but about contributing and finding a meaningful purpose in existence. For some this will be linked to religion, to others protection of the environment - each individual needs to find what matters most to them.

The purpose of a school is to educate the whole child, not just to achieve high academic success. This is particularly relevant for this dimension in ensuring that meaning is multi-faceted.

Summary.

Hattie's (2009) meta-analysis of effective education highlights the centrality of the quality of the teacher-student relationship. Relationships within a school environment however, are multiple and ecological - the way teachers relate to each other impacts on relationships in the classroom (Roffey, 2008). In an ecological framework learning and changes are bi-directional and teacher-student relationships may be changed by how peers are learning what is involved in a healthy relationships. There is increasing evidence that social and emotional learning has a positive impact on inter-related outcomes (Durlak et al, 2011). This includes the development of pro-social behaviour leading to a happier classroom and increased student engagement. How this learning is facilitated and whether or not the context in which it is embedded is congruent also makes a difference to sustainable change (McCarthy & Roffey 2013).

What is now needed is a mixed method school evaluation of how the ASPIRE principles and the Twelve Dimensions make a difference over time to the levels of social capital across a school, the emotional climate in the classroom, social and emotional learning outcomes and the behaviour and engagement of individual students.

Resources:

St Luke's Innovative Resources: www.innovativeresources.org

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Addendum

Twelve Dimensions for Content and Context for Learning Relationships

SEL Dimension	Content	Context
Self-awareness • Being and becoming	Identification of values, beliefs, strengths and goals.	Clarity of school values, vision, priorities and direction A focus on the wellbeing of the whole child
Emotional awareness and knowledge • Aetiology • Triggers • Embodiment • Social construction	Understanding the range of emotions and how they are experienced within the body. Awareness of personal, social and cultural influences on feelings.	Emotional 'tone' of the school, how this is demonstrated and the influences on development.
Emotional skills • Regulation • Expression • Resilience	Dealing with and regulating negative emotion. Acceptable expression of feelings within context. Knowing what sustains emotional wellbeing and promotes resilience	Awareness of adult models of emotional literacy Communication of expectations Staff wellbeing and resilience
Shared humanity • How do we position others in our world?	Appreciating uniqueness for self and others Valuing diversity Seeking what is shared	Celebration of diversity Actively addressing racism, sexism and homophobia Inclusive policies for students with special needs A sense of belonging and connectedness for all
Interpersonal skills • Skills needed to establish and maintain positive relationships	Exploring the meaning and practice of relational values e.g. kindness, care, helpfulness, warmth, respect, trust, support Communication skills, especially listening Collaboration and cooperation	Facilitative teacher-student relationships Student and staff voice Staff collegiality Collaborative pedagogies Positive communication practices Support systems
Situational skills • Tuning into the emotional context	Empathy Reading, interpreting and tuning into emotions in situations Not pre-judging Awareness of timing	Taking account of emotions in situations of challenge, change, failure and loss Flexibility and appropriate responsiveness in highly charged situations

SEL Dimension	Content	Context
Leadership	Goal setting Initiative Responsibility Confidence Dealing with peer pressure Opportunities to contribute	Communication of vision. Acknowledging and trusting others; genuine consultation Staff ownership of initiatives 'Walking the talk' Avoiding a blame discourse
Promoting the positive • Strengths and solutions approach	Optimism Gratitude Humour	Identifying and building strengths and solutions Positive behaviour policies Pedagogies for fun, meaning and engagement
Conflict and confrontation • Dealing well with relational difficulties	Negotiation Compromise Appropriate assertiveness Problem-solving	Pre-empting potential conflict Appropriate use of authority De-escalating confrontation Addressing conflict actively. Anti-bullying policies
Repair and restoration • Mending damage in relationships and restoring community	Acknowledging hurt Acknowledging a range of responses in any given situation Willingness to compromise Responding to repair overtures Action to repair harm	Restorative approaches to behaviour Mistakes as part of learning Policies of re-integration for excluded students
Ethics and integrity • Moral / human rights dimensions of SEL	Honesty Trustworthiness Consistency Ethical decision making Focus on human rights A philosophy for life	Core values in social justice Congruence between values, policies and practices Authenticity
Spirituality • Seeking meaning in life	Identity Mindfulness Perspective Congruence Environmental responsibility	Philosophy of education about the whole child in all dimensions and their contribution to humanity - not just their own success

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