Using Diversity as a Strength

> This chapter explores celebrating diversity through multiple intelligences, and particularly examine the importance of developing emotional intelligence. How this is applied in the classroom and linked to cooperative learning is discussed.

One of the most effective ways of supporting inclusion in schools is by celebrating and valuing diversity. Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences[1] has revolutionised our thinking about ability, focusing instead on valuing different individual strengths. Instead of basing views on intelligence quotient (IQ) tests with an underpinning notion that intelligence is fixed, Gardner proposed that there was not one but many kinds of intelligences. Gardner originally identified seven main types of intelligence: verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical-rhythmic, interpersonal and intrapersonal. He has since added to these and now includes naturalistic and existential, and indicates that there may be other categories. The key point to bear in mind is that this revolutionises the concept of IQ as an indicator of intelligence and instead acknowledges the many manifestations of ability.

Traditional schooling favours verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences, which in turns disadvantages children who have strengths in other areas. However, in cooperative learning classrooms diversity is used as a strength where each member of the group contributes in varied ways to a common goal.

Gardner's work is widely known and accepted in schools. But the interpretation can be problematic and Gardner has endeavoured to correct misinterpretations. We need to be mindful that his descriptions of intelligences are not fixed categories or pigeon holes into which we can put children; instead, they act as a guide to supporting and valuing children's many talents.

Schools are familiar with the notion of learning styles. The concept is derived from classification of psychological types, which shows that, as a result of heredity, upbringing and environment, individuals perceive and deal with information differently. Such classifications are also open to criticism; nevertheless, many schools have adopted a teaching approach known as 'VAK': visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. The underlying idea is that teachers should use a range of teaching styles to support children's preferred modes of learning. Visual learning can be supported by pictures, charts and diagrams, and so on. Auditory learning can take place through oral presentations

and is often supported by learning mnemonics or singing rhymes. Kinaesthetic learning is supported by actions and practical tasks. There is a danger of regarding this too simplistically and thinking of individuals as having fixed learning styles. Most of us use a mixture of learning styles. In essence our learning experiences needs to be varied to encourage children to use different learning styles strategically, to become efficient learners.

It is not just particular styles or strengths that we need to tap into in schools, but also dispositions to learning. Guy Claxton in his book, *Building Learning Power,*[2] cites the following powerful example, entitled 'learning the bagpipes in public':

> On his first morning as the new head of Staple Hill Primary School, he picked up his bagpipes and strode into assembly. Though they had been bought several weeks before, Pete had resisted the temptation to practise. He was a total bagpipe virgin, and he was going to attempt to play them for the very first time in front of several hundred unknown youngsters, not to mention the staff. Peter explained that he couldn't play the pipes, but he wanted to, and he was going to show them, week by week, his progress, and talk to them about his ups and downs. Then he put the bagpipes to his lips and blew. As expected, he made a truly dreadful noise, and after a shocked silence, the students burst into laughter.

Claxton goes to show how the head used this as a powerful example to demonstrate the attitudes needed to succeed, what he calls the 4Rs: resilience (stickability), resourcefulness (being prepared to learn in different ways), reflectiveness (evaluating, planning and adapting) and reciprocity (interdependence, collaborating). This is about developing 'learning fitness' and can be likened to a sportsman or woman working on stamina, strength and coordination. So how do we do this mental workout? Claxton sees the first task as developing greater resilience and being able to 'lock onto learning and to resist distractions from outside and within'. Easier said than done, as many teachers would comment, faced by children who often are only too easily distracted.

Daniel Goleman's work on emotional intelligence[3] provides a fascinating insight into developing the ability to deny immediate self-gratification. Indeed, he states this ability is a greater predictor of later success for children than traditional IQ tests. He describes a study of 4-year-olds who were placed individually in a room with a researcher and in front of them were some sweets. They were told they could have two sweets if they could wait while the researcher went out of the room for a short time. The description of the children attempting to distract themselves from the lure of the sweets makes amusing reading. Some tried to cover their eyes, sing, talk to themselves, play games or even try to go to sleep. The study tracked down the children as they graduated from high school much later and found that those children who managed to resist temptation and not eat the sweets became better adjusted people, able to cope with setbacks and stress. The children who had grabbed the sweets had a more troubled psychological picture. They had become less confident socially, more indecisive and lacking in self-esteem.

So we need to delay self-gratification. Children need to learn that to delay getting an instant reward pays off. But how can we support this in school and develop good learning dispositions? Claxton suggests the following:

■ **Managing distractions:** some of these are easy to eliminate, such as basic needs – being tired, hungry or thirsty makes it hard to concentrate. But other things impact also, such as being uncomfortable or too much noise around. It is about being able to diminish distractions and often this is very different for each individual. Some can work with blaring music, others need silence. As teachers we often need to manage these for children. But how can we help them to develop the ability to block out what

is around them? Often this is through interesting and stimulating tasks, pitched at the right level. Sometimes it is by modelling being absorbed, for example, in nowadays infrequent silent reading time. How often do teachers sit absorbed in a book at the same time as are children? Children learn from such examples.

Some time ago a clerk in an office I was working in, recited to me her experience commuting to work on the train. She had witnessed something she found incredible. The person in front of her had sat down and opened her book. During the whole of the 50 minute journey, which was typically crammed with commuters, the person opposite had not looked up once. Her eyes had scanned the words and her hands had turned the pages, but she was totally absorbed in another world. It was what the psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi[4] calls 'flow' and the young clerk I worked with had, to my surprise, never experienced it.

Flow is the ability to get lost in learning; a state of being utterly lost in what you are doing and in this state, emotions are channelled and aligned with the task in hand. It is when you are stretched to your limits and feel spontaneous joy and intrinsic reward. Entering such a state is the ultimate in avoiding distractions. Once experienced and fostered, this can be a life-changing experience; one we need to promote in young children.

■ **Noticing and identifying significant detail** is a further skill that supports a resilient attitude to learning – a skill that can be improved with practice. This is often helped by being alongside others who are proficient and able to demonstrate and verbalise their skills. It is supported by the child taking on the role of apprentice with a more skilled peer or adult.

■ **Perseverance is another aspect of resilience:** developing the skill of keeping going when faced with difficulties, re-establishing lost concentration, not giving up and trying different routes. Children need to realise that learning is not easy: they may not understand something straight away and being bright does not mean that you always learn things easily. It means you persist. There are subtle messages here that children can easily pick up from teachers – messages we need to avoid conveying.

Now read Think about this 2.1 and discuss how you could support the child.

Think about this 2.1:

I can't do it!

Craig sits eagerly in an art lesson. There is a visitor today come to show the children how to draw buildings. The children watch carefully and then it is their turn to have a go. Craig picks up his sheet of paper and a pencil and begins to draw the outline of the building. The teacher circulates to help and encourage everyone. Suddenly there is a cry from Craig: 'Oh no!' But before anyone can do anything he erupts in a fury screwing his paper up in a ball and flinging it across the room. He sits slumped in despair. The visiting artist goes to speak to him. 'Whatever is the problem?' he asks. 'I can't do it. I can't draw. I will never be able to,' he responds. 'Of course, you can,' says the visitor. 'You are just learning and you have to practise. Let's look at how far you got.' A look at the screwed-up drawing reveals that the

(Continued)

picture was taking shape. But Craig points to a window that is not quite the right size or shape. 'Well, don't worry about that,' says the visitor, 'Let me see how you can change it'. No matter how hard he tries, Craig won't listen; if he can't do it straight away he gives up. Bubbling over with self-doubt and lack of self-esteem he sinks into despair and refuses to take part in the rest of the lesson.

Craig is a not untypical child who has not developed good learning dispositions. At the heart of such dispositions is the ability to harness our emotions fruitfully, so they do not disrupt our more rational thoughts. We need to develop emotional intelligence. So, if we are going to help children like Craig we need to be clear what emotional intelligence consists of and how to support its development. Let us now look more closely at what this involves, at what Daniel Goleman calls 'emotional intelligence'.

What are the characteristics of emotional intelligence?

■ To be able to get on well with others in a group.

■ To be at ease with oneself through awareness of own abilities.

■ To be assertive rather than aggressive.

■ To be able to recognise and control emotions.

■ To understand that emotions can impact on our behaviour and reflect on this.

■ To have empathy for others.

Emotional intelligence can be summarised as consisting of five main domains:

1. **Knowing one's emotions.** This relates to self-awareness: recognising and monitoring feelings.

2. **Managing emotions.** Having recognised emotions, it is important to control or use them effectively, in order to avoid excessive anxiety or feelings or failure.

3. **Motivating oneself.** This concerns utilising emotions to support a goal and involves delaying gratification, being able to get into the 'flow' state to accomplish outstanding performance.

4. **Recognising emotions in others.** Building on self-awareness is awareness of others: empathy, a fundamental 'people skill'.

5. **Handling relationships.** This follows from being able to control one's own emotions, being able to work harmoniously with others and to develop a sense of belonging.

These aspects that make up 'emotional intelligence' underpin working with others. One of the key themes of *Every Child Matters* is to be healthy, both physically and mentally. Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in being healthy and as the Department for Education and Skills

The Domains of Emotional Intelligence: Fig. 2.1

Domain	Behaviour	Teaching strategies
1. Self-awareness	• Identify, recognise and express feelings • Recognise that context affects the acceptability of different behaviours • Aware that our feelings affect our behaviours • Aware that our thoughts affect our feelings and behaviours	Team-building projects Social skills groups Circle time Challenging questions
2. Managing emotions	• Express emotions in helpful ways • Can calm down when necessary • Have strategies for coping with anger • Seek support when needed • Change feelings by reflection	Role play Circle time Teaching calming down strategies Support strategies: time out
3. Motivating oneself	• Set personal goals • Break down goals into small steps • Concentrate and resist distractions • Bounce back after disappointment • Delay gratification	Individual target setting Support different learning styles Celebrate achievements Cooperative groupwork
4. Recognising emotions in others (empathy)	• Recognise the feelings of others • Understand others' points of view • Value and respect the feelings and beliefs of others • Understand actions affect others	Role play Circle time Playground buddies Counselling skills Conflict resolution strategies Cooperative groupwork
5. Handling relationships (social skills)	• Belong to a community • Understand rights and responsibilities • Make and sustain friendships • Be assertive when appropriate • Work with others in a group	Conflict resolution strategies Role play Cooperative groupwork

(DfES) *Guidance on the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL) shows*: 'The development of emotional and social competence and well-being can reduce mental health problems of young people and their teachers'.[5]

In addition, developing emotional intelligence is the cornerstone of cooperative learning. But, before we can look further at working cooperatively we must consider this in more detail. Examine the grid in Figure 2.1 and add any further activities you undertake in school.

Applying emotional intelligence in the classroom

Since the publication of Daniel Goleman's book on emotional intelligence, teachers have become increasingly fascinated by its implications. Some feel that he has overstated the case of its importance. Nevertheless, teachers generally recognise the impact of an inability to understand ourselves and others and control our emotions, on academic progress.

So how can teachers support emotional intelligence and can it be taught? My experience of teaching in a primary classroom is that it needs a specific programme, timetabled every week, given key importance and to be part of a whole school ethos. There is a range of published programmes (see websites at the end of the chapter) for schools to choose from as well the Primary National Strategy programme *Excellence and Enjoyment: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning*, known as SEAL. This package supports professional development and provides a framework and a wide range of teaching materials from Foundation Stage to Year 6. It states: *'Social, emotional and behavioural skills underlie almost every aspect of school, home and community life, including effective learning and getting on with other people. They are fundamental to school improvement'.*[6]

Therefore emotional intelligence underpins the ability to work and get on with others. But if we are to support children in using their emotional intelligence to support their learning, they need to work together with others cooperatively. Figure 2.2 lists strategies that support emotional intelligence in the classroom. Review this list with colleagues to decide how to improve your provision.

In Chapter 4 we look closely at cooperative learning strategies to support emotional intelligence and the 'affective' domains of learning (shown by the five key aspects of emotional intelligence) linked to the cognitive domains of learning, described as consisting of reasoning, evaluation, creativity, enquiry, problem-solving and information processing. The research evidence is strong[7] into the impact of cooperative learning that shows how working cooperatively improves social skills and emotional intelligence.

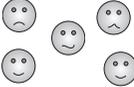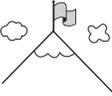### Professional development activities

This chapter has included the following CPD activities:

Activity 2.1: Reading Think about this 2.1 followed by discussion of how you could support this child.

Activity 2.2: Domains of emotional intelligence. Reading and adding activities to the grid in Figure 2.1.

Activity 2.3: Strategies to support emotional intelligence. Reviewing and auditing provision in school.

Figure 2.2   Strategies to support emotional intelligence

Strategy	Focusing	Developing	Establishing	Enhancing
Procedures for establishing rights and responsibilities of pupils are set up (i.e. involvement in class and school rules).				
Pupils are involved in decision-making with class meetings and school council				
Circle time is used effectively, including establishing ground rules and following a planned structure.				
A programme for teaching the five key elements of emotional intelligence is in place and pupils understand success criteria and set goals accordingly.				
1. Self-awareness is taught through: providing opportunities for reflection through (ALF) and setting goals, helped to identify and express a range of feelings.				
2. Managing feelings is taught through: a range of calming down strategies, understanding effects of emotions, being able to reflect on feelings and knowing where to go for support.				
3. Motivating ourselves is taught through: support in setting achievable goals, knowing how to break down goals into small steps, understanding the need to persist.				
4. Empathy is taught through: recognising the feelings of others, understanding others' points of view.				
5. Social skills is taught through: active listening, conflict resolution procedures, assertiveness training, communication skills.				

* = Assessment for Learning

Points to remember

1. There are many types of intelligence, and differing learning styles, but we should be wary of oversimplifying or putting children into neat pigeon holes.

2. We need to support children in developing learning habits or dispositions.

3. To cope successfully with life as well as academic learning, it is important to develop emotional intelligence.

4. Applying the skills of emotional intelligence in the classroom requires a whole-school, systematic teaching programme.

5. Utilising emotional intelligence – both intrapersonal and interpersonal skills – requires interaction with others.

6. Teaching cooperatively supports and develops emotional intelligence.

Further reading

Claxton, G. (2002) *Building Learning Power.* Bristol: TLO Ltd.

DfES (2005) *Guidance on the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL).* (Ref: DfES 1319-2005.) London: DfES.

Goleman, D. (1995) *Emotional Intelligence.* New York: Bantam Books.

Goleman, D. (1998) *Working with Emotional Intelligence.* London: Bloomsbury.

Weare, K. (2004) *Developing the Emotional Intelligent School.* London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Websites and social and emotional learning programmes

Campaign for Learning, www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk

CASEL (The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning), www.casel.org

Emotional Literacy Education and Self-Knowledge, www.emotionalliteracyeducation.com

Excellence and Enjoyment: learning and teaching in the primary years (DfES 0518-2004 G). www.standards.dfes.gov

Excellence and Enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning (DfES 1378-2005 G), www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/banda

Jenny Mosley Consultancies/ Positive Press Ltd, Whole School Quality Circle Time Model, www.circle-time.co.uk

Kids EQ: The Children's Emotional Literacy Project, www.kidseq.com

Lucky Duck Publishing, Sage Publications and Paul Chapman Publishing, www.luckyduck.co.uk

SAPERE (Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education), www.sapere.net

School of Emotional Literacy, www.schoolofemotional-literacy.com

SEAL – Society for Effective Affective Learning, www.seal.org.uk

The Incredible Years, www.incredibleyears.com

The National Emotional Literacy Interest Group, www.nelig.com

Transforming Conflict, www.transformingconflict.com