

## Resource 4: Why emotional learning matters

(From *Learning by Heart: The role of emotional education in raising school achievement* by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and *Remembering Education*, page 6)

### **A Understanding emotions is directly connected with motivation and with cognitive achievement.**

A growing body of evidence<sup>1</sup> points towards the importance of self-confidence and a feeling of well being in the learning process. Pupils who have taken part in programs to raise their awareness of emotions and to enhance their self-esteem achieve better scores on standardised government tests. The changes we propose would greatly enhance the government's drive towards raising standards.

### **B Dealing with emotions helps to develop better relationships and a sense of psychological and mental well being.**

In schools where emotional learning is acknowledged, people become:

- increasingly considerate and thoughtful towards others
- less tense and fraught
- more harmonious
- more co-operative in spirit.

Significant numbers of pupils feel disaffected, alienated and cut off from school and society. Within school, this manifests itself as bullying, conflict and confrontation, truancy and temporary or permanent exclusion. In the wider community, its effects are all too clearly visible in vandalism, drug taking, juvenile crime and a range of other social problems. Again, recent research<sup>2</sup> points to the effectiveness of emotional learning in helping to tackle these problems.

### **C Emotionally developed young people are better equipped to live with difference.**

The same research programmes suggest that tolerance of difference whether social, cultural or racial increases as pupils come to understand how they affect others and how others see the world. In short, emotional learning enables pupils to celebrate and embrace cultural diversity.

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**D Educating the emotions leads to a more effective work force.**

When asked to list the most sought after skills<sup>3</sup> employers not only underline the need for literacy and numeracy, but also repeatedly cite the ability to work as part of a team, to take responsibility, to be flexible and open to change, to be creative and resourceful. Being given the chance to develop these personal qualities is an essential part of what we mean by emotional learning.

**E Our moral outlook and value systems are deeply shaped by our attitudes and feelings.**

Young people need help to become conscious of the part played by feeling in the forming of values and in making decisions. Values and attitudes cannot be 'delivered'. Moral codes cannot be transmitted through exhortation or a straightforward appeal to reason. Young people can only develop a moral sense if their feelings are engaged. Without this dimension, values will remain lifeless and extrinsic.

**F Our sense of meaning and purpose is derived as much from feeling as from understanding.**

We would assert that the sense of awe and wonder, the sense of beauty and mystery which every subject can evoke and which leads to the deepest questions of human existence is at heart a question of feeling. Finally, then, but by no means the least important of our reasons for seeking to place emotional education alongside the cognitive is that without it pupils' search for meaning is barren and dry.

1 Weissberg, R and Greenberg, M *School and community competence-enhancement and prevention programs in Handbook of Child Psychology*, Series editor, Damon, W (John Wiley and Sons, 1997).

2 Ibid.

3 See, for instance, *Better Choices* (DfE/DfES 1994)