

Quality Education News

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A word or three from the Editor

Dear Supporter of Quality Education

Are children happy to be in your class or school? We know the importance of the answer being "Yes". A happy child is normally an achieving child. The child's innate potential has a greater chance of being realised. When the child's unhappy, there are negative consequences. The child often underachieves. Also there's the increased likelihood of the learner becoming a bully or, if bullied, not having the skills to stop it.

In quality management practice, much attention is paid to organisational climate. Every school has its unique 'vibe' or organisational climate. When the organisational climate is sound, the children enjoy (most of the time!) the school day. Teachers and support staff do too. When the inevitable 'pear shaped' days happen, the happy school has effective coping strategies. Everyone comes out smiling. The child and the school are usually stronger for these torrid experiences.

Can a child be taught to be happy? Dr Anthony Seldon is an esteemed but also controversial headmaster of Wellington College in England. He maintains that children can be taught to be happy. Seldon is a breakthrough, maverick leader. He 'walks the talk' as regards his educational theories. As a result, there are formal 'happiness' or 'well-being' lessons at Wellington College. He's handled public criticism well and proven the validity of his theories. Be stimulated or provoked by the short article on the next page!

There's a long list of values that permeate the quality school. Recently I was in the Western Cape at Parkview Primary near Atlantis. The school is in a tough community. The area has high levels of drugging, unemployment and teenage pregnancies. Yet this school with so little in the way of physical resources gives so much back to the community. Volunteerism is a value to inculcate into children even if the school doesn't use the exact word. There's a look at this seldom-mentioned value.

This is the last issue of QEN for 2008. Thank you for your support. I've truly enjoyed the feedback about the newsletter. Please share your quality ideas with other readers. Your ideas get weaved into the newsletters for the benefit of others.

A huge Thank You goes to Michelle Janse van Rensburg and the MySchool online distribution team. A growth of 300% in the mailing list in only two years is phenomenal! Finally, much appreciation goes to Vanessa du Toit at SAQI head office. She transforms typed words into pages that are pleasing-to-the-eye. For all your cheerful patience, Vanessa in dealing with a pernickety editor ...many thanks.

May all the good work done during the year be rewarded with quality exam results. Then have an enjoyable holiday. We deserve it!

Sincerely

Richard Hayward



This newsletter is edited by SAQI and distributed to those schools benefiting from their participation in the MySchool programme. MySchool acts as a conduit which raises and delivers essential funding for education and social development on a sustainable basis. This enables members of the community to participate in the future development of our nation.



Teaching happiness

Schools need to devote more time to helping children discover who they are, what they love about life and how to live it to the full.

Anthony Seldon

Anthony Seldon is not a favourite headmaster amongst his peers in the British school system. He's been rubbished by sectors of the education world for asking awkward questions. Although the school, Wellington College, achieves outstanding results in public examinations, Seldon is highly critical of society's preoccupation with scholastic results. He accuses school life of being heavily dictated by government, universities and employers. Schools are being forced to march to the drumbeat of the examination conductor.

Seldon doesn't decry the importance of encouraging a learner to excel academically. However, he has a much wider vision of what comprises a sound education. He strongly supports Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. At Wellington College the aim is to nurture and develop eight intelligences – logical, linguistic, sporting, artistic, personal, social, moral and spiritual – which are deemed to be found in every human being.

Excellent exam results, asserts Seldon, don't necessarily turn out well-balanced learners. According to him, young people need to be guided towards living happy and meaningful lives. They need to be shown how to live life to the full; hence the 'well-being' or 'happiness' programme at the school. The programme is part of the formal school timetable.

What do these lessons designed by Dr Nick Baylis of Cambridge University consist of? Seldon (The Telegraph 24 May 2007) gives a skeletal outline:

- Lessons are centred on the development of personal responsibility by each child. Pupils learn how to manage their own bodies, minds and emotions ... how to rely on themselves, rather than on other people or drugs, including alcohol.
- The aim is to embed lessons and habits that will last for life. Children are taught how to relax when they are worried, how to make the right decision when a variety of courses is presented to them, and how to manage themselves when they feel lonely or low without resorting to pills.
- Relationships with others, the greatest cause of both happiness and unhappiness in life, are also studied in detail. The pupils learn how to identify and treasure true friends, and how to avoid relationships which are damaging and destructive.

In South African schools, many Life Orientation lessons cover aspects of the Wellington College curriculum. There are, however, differences. More details and links to resource material are available by internet googling of Anthony Seldon or Nick Baylis.

The quality school strives to ensure that the child is happy at school. Anthony Seldon adds a further challenge. Why doesn't the selfsame school help a child to be happy for life?



Happiness, I believe, lies in knowing one's own limitations ... accepting oneself for what one is, and being proud of what one achieves, at whatever level that might be.
Anthony Seldon

An absolute winner at the Olympics: volunteerism

Billions of people worldwide watched the Opening Ceremony of the Beijing Olympics. It was spectacular. For the sixteen days of the Olympics, the world saw China display superb organisational skills. The Chinese government poured billions of dollars into the event. The available money was a definite factor in ensuring its success. There was another winning factor: volunteerism.

Two years ago in 2006, the Beijing Olympics Organising Committee made an appeal. It asked for volunteers. An incredible 1,7 million people stepped forward. These volunteers ensured that visitors, participants and a worldwide audience would see an unforgettable extravaganza.

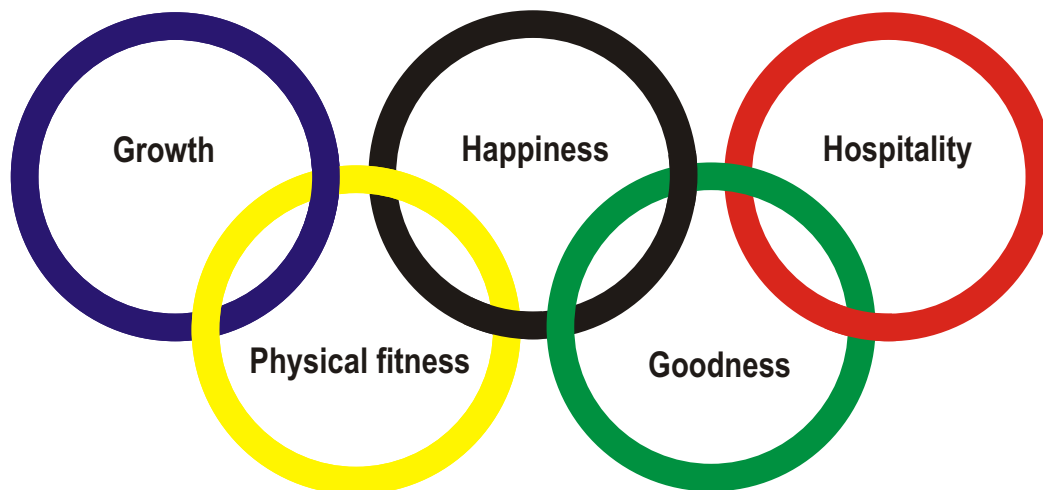
On an infinitely smaller scale, every school needs volunteers. When the value of volunteerism is alive, there are mini-Olympian achievements. School events run well, fund-raising events usually reach their targets and improvement projects become a reality.

All quality schools have core values. Volunteerism as a value is worthy of consideration. Two broad types of volunteerism are evident. The one involves children, parents and staff stepping forward to help within the school.

The other form of volunteerism is when those same people make contributions beyond the school gates. So many fine schools do just that. High schools have outreach programmes. Volunteers help disadvantaged schools in activities such as Maths, Science and sports coaching. At primary school level, young children are volunteers when, for example, they sing like angels at the local Old Age Home.

A volunteer learns quickly of the beautiful flip-side to giving. The volunteer has given of hard work, time, talent and sometimes, money. In return the volunteer gets appreciation, a sense of achievement, many smiles and even tears of gratitude.

South African society desperately needs the spirit of volunteerism and not only for the 2010 World Cup soccer tournament. Volunteerism is a golden characteristic of the quality school.



A foundation of value

Debbie Sim teaches at Christian Brothers College in Pretoria. She is Head: Foundation Phase. Her teaching team made the Beijing Olympics an exciting adventure for the children. The Olympic theme was integrated across the curriculum. Values were taught using the Olympic Rings. The children were being given a valued education in a delightful, fun way.

Celebrate Quality

School foyers and entrances often reflect what is considered most important by the staff. Display cabinets are filled with trophies and cups. Achievement award certificates are framed and are there for all to see. One prestigious Johannesburg school includes in its displays framed photographs of its top Grade Twelve academic achievers. Many schools put their Vision and Mission statements on prominent display. To the visitor, the foyer is a visual snapshot of what's really important to the school.

How many schools stress in their foyer displays that it's a Quality-focussed school ... that it's driven by certain principles and practices? How many schools publicly celebrate the excellent set of ethical values displayed by individual children? And what about the quality staff who make it all happen?

The learners themselves can make displays. There could be a poster competition around the words, 'Quality is ...' They could write an article with the opening sentence, "I'm at a quality school because..." Picture (collage) displays could be designed under the heading 'Quality in my life'. Yes, there could well be pictures of Adidas footwear, Billabong clothing and Steers burgers. Hopefully, there'll also be pictures of significant quality people such as moms, dads, grannies, classmates, teachers and even siblings!

Like the entrance foyer display, every classroom tells a similar story. Classroom wall displays and projects reflect what the teacher regards as important. How about having an ever-changing Quality display board in the classroom? Outstanding work can be acknowledged. So too can excellent effort with school work. Children, who've displayed admirable character traits both in and outside the classroom, can get their week of fame on the class boards.

The South African National Quality Week will be held this year from 10 to 14 November. World Quality Day is on Thursday, 13 November. Celebrate the Quality in your classrooms and your school. If you like colour, festoon the displays with green and white (the SAQI colours) balloons and streamers! Move beyond talking about Quality ...show it!

What's your school theme for 2009?

Towards the end of the year, many schools decide on a possible theme for the next year. The theme helps everyone focus on an issue that's seen as important for the betterment of the school. Sometimes that focus is on a particular learning area such as Numeracy or Maths. Or the focus could deal with issues such as absenteeism, bullying or improving the level of extramural participation.

What about making 2009 a year in which there's a focus on Quality? Create an awareness of the core values of the school. Develop those leadership styles that define the quality school. Train people for leadership, however young they might be. Help children and staff identify the fine qualities in themselves and others. Teach everyone effective communication and conflict-resolution skills. Have programmes and workshops around Quality principles and practices.

When choosing a theme, it's a good idea to have a slogan. Some suggestions are:

- Giving quality children a quality education (Acknowledgement: IR Griffith Primary School)
- Quality for all (Catholic Institute of Education)
- Quality education for all (Department of National Education)
- Quality is guaranteed here!
- We're a quality-focused school

So, don't make 2009 an ordinary year. Make it a year of extraordinary Quality!

SAQI has a range of programmes dealing with quality leadership and management issues. Poor schools are sponsored. For more details, please contact Vanessa du Toit on 012-349-5006 (vanessa@saqi.co.za) or Richard Hayward on 011-888-3262 (rpdhayward@yahoo.com)

Back issues of this online newsletter are available on two sites. The newsletters are on the SAQI site of www.saqi.co.za. Go to the Education section. They're also on the My School site of www.MySchool.co.za Click on 'QEN' at the centre bottom of the page.