

## **LETTER FROM THE HEADMASTER**

“No one undertakes a journey alone. We depend upon others constantly – to move us towards our destination. We cannot succeed without the help of others.” - John Maxwell

Solid and healthy relationships depend on teamwork that has five characteristics:

~ Respect ~ Shared Experience ~ Trust ~ Reciprocity ~ Mutual Enjoyment ~

When you work together to build healthy relationships that include these elements you will be more successful and able to make a positive impact on your world.

Relationships are one of the most important roles that we, as educators, have to develop. Developing relationships with the learners we teach and assisting the learners to develop relationships to foster further learning is critical. We need to develop positive and respectful relationships with everyone we are involved with. We have to work hard together to develop the 5 characteristics with our pupils and children. As we develop these characteristics we are able to build strong working relationships.

A good relationship takes time and effort. It is imperative that we work at developing these characteristics in our children.

I would like to focus on respect this week.

Many teachers have the following one rule in their classroom: Respect. Often it is expanded into respect for yourself, respect for others, and respect for property. Respect is a quality that is essential to creating an environment where we can all flourish.

Is this something that we always reciprocate to our students and children though? It is not that we do things intentionally to disrespect our students and children. I would actually argue that as educators we go over and above to continuously nurture our students and care for them. However, there are some little things that we do that could be taken the wrong way by our children.

For example, we continuously talk about how children are a lot different from when we grew up. Of course they are. Society has changed as well; how could they not be different? It is when we say it in the context that we were actually better back in the “good old days” that it becomes demeaning.

Sometimes it is simple language like, “they are just children”, that can be demeaning, whether we say it to our children or to other adults. Throwing the word “just” in to a phrase that describes a group can often be belittling whether we say it to the children or to other adults.

They are “just” teachers. She is “just” the principal. They are “just” parents. He is “just” the substitute teacher. None of those sound good, no matter the context. The intent is not that we don’t value our children but it is that little word (just) that may send the wrong message.

One of the basic elements of respect is a mutual trust. We need to extend trust to our students and children. Will Richardson speaks of the following:

“What if, however, we stopped doing that (deciding what and when to learn for our students) and trusted the kids? What if we as teachers saw ourselves as part of a much bigger “cloud” of adults whose main role was to develop and support the enthusiasm for learning that our children innately bring with them to school but that we all too often temper in our zeal to “deliver” the curriculum? That would represent a huge shift not only in the role of the teacher but also in moving the classroom to a rich, ongoing, passionate learning space that children want to attend.”

In this type of setting, many feel that our expectations are sometimes lowered for our students as they just frivolously wander around the room. In fact, the standard should actually raise significantly. In the “traditional” model, there is only so much a student can learn from one source leading the way (the teacher). When we put this element of trust into our students and provide different sources from students to learn from (rich resources, technology, peers), the output should increase significantly.

Reading Marc Prensky’s, Teaching Digital Natives; Partnering for Real Learning, he discusses the importance of working with our students and some of the key elements that they are looking for in their learning:

“They do not want to be lectured to.

They want to be respected, to be trusted, and to have their opinions valued and count.

They want to follow their own interests and passions.

They want to create, using the tools of their time.

They want to work with their peers on group work and projects (and prevent slackers from getting a free ride).

They want to make decisions and share control.

They want to connect with their peers to express and share their opinions, in class and around the world.

They want to cooperate and compete with each other.

They want an education that is not just relevant, but real.”

We always need to take care of our children and sometimes, yes, we need to do things that they do not agree with to ensure their safety and well-being. However, we also need to ensure our actions constantly align with this belief in respect.

Maybe one of the biggest elements of respect is that we want more for our students and our children than we ever had.

“...we must conceive of what educators do in a new way—not just as teachers, but as rocket designers, building and sending off the best rockets we possibly can.” (Marc Prensky)