

Стручне
информације

COOLFIRE

A Holistic Solution to the Teaching-Learning-Life Equation

All Teaching and Learning is Emotionally Based - but this maxim appears to be frequently ignored within many education systems across the Developed World. Instead, an almost exclusive emphasis on what is just a part of the teaching-learning equation - thinking and the role of the mind - focuses on a task-driven not person oriented process:

Task: Understanding: Completion: Assessment

This in turn is underpinned by a system of “top-down” sanctions if the student does not comply in the required way. Consequently, all forms of teacher-student communication and relationships are filtered through this task-focused disciplinary framework that provides only limited scenarios and options of repeating or escalating the severity of sanction - en route to temporary or permanent exclusion...

This cumulative impasse is a central factor in deteriorating teacher-student relationships that often drains motivation and engagement - not only detaching the student from the whole process, but also creating defensive student attitudes and behaviour patterns that resonate throughout all school, home and social rela-

tionships - and consequential wider interaction.

So is this system delivering the vital academic and personal development skills for its future generations - which also (in turn underpins) the continuing economic growth and prosperity of a given country..? By the UK government’s own definitions of educational standards - apparently not:

- In 2013, 36% of pupils aged 16 in England did not achieve the threshold pass (Grade C or above) in English at GCSE; 42% missed the benchmark in Maths (1)
- In 2013, 17% of teenagers - aged 16-19 left school in the UK being functionally illiterate - one of the

higher rates in leading industrialised countries (2)

- In the fourth quarter of 2013, 1.04 million 16-24 year olds in the UK were not in education, employment or training (NEET). This represents 14.4% of the total age group (3)
- In 2011-12, 304,370 pupils were suspended from UK primary and secondary schools: 690 primary pupils were permanently excluded; 4390 secondary pupils were also permanently excluded. On average, 90 children a day were excluded for attacks on teachers (4)

And in terms of international measures and assessment:

- In 2013 - out of 24 countries, the OECD ranks young adults in England (aged 16-24) - 22nd for literacy and 21st for numeracy - a level no better than their grandparents’ generation (5)
- The UK ranked 32 out of 38 countries in a survey of school behaviour by the OECD in 2013 (6)

Hence it’s not just the academic-related disciplines of motivation, concentration and expression that



need to be addressed, but also the closely allied aspects of behaviour, classroom and personal relationships - and the seemingly inevitable degree of stress created within the overall process - partly as a result of a reactive system of sanctions to obtain compliance.

A paradigm shift is required: one that will enable academic attainment to emerge from a focus on personal development - both within the student and wider teaching staff - moving the emphasis from “task” to “person” at the heart of an integrated approach - which in turn will boost each student’s academic progress whilst also fostering continuing personal development for life: and all without a negative impact on an already overcrowded curriculum...

Over the last five years, **CoolFire** has created such a paradigm shift - and we continue to work with teachers and students (aged 4-16+) in schools of all types and Local Education Authorities throughout the UK - together with two of Britain’s leading teaching unions. CoolFire has also played a significant part in a recent major EU Emotional Literacy project (ELIA), working with vocational subject teachers in Austria and has also staged workshops for the Teacher Training Faculty of the University of Belgrade.

Created and developed by Dave Read - a highly experienced classroom teacher and professional Reiki therapist - CoolFire extends the boundaries and application of Emotional Literacy. The CoolFire Approach draws on a wide range of interlocking established therapeutic disciplines and has proven to create actual positive change in both students and

teachers. CoolFire transforms many facets of teaching and learning - academic skills and personal lifeskills - including concentration; motivation and engagement; behaviour; teacher-student relationships; peer-to-peer and family relationships - and much more. Once established, CoolFire creates a continuing framework that transparently fits over the structure of the school and home day without impacting on available teaching time.

So how can Emotional Literacy be defined..? Here’s Dr Richard Majors interpretation:

“A perspective that helps us to recognise, understand, interpret and manage our own behaviour and the behaviour of others. Emotional Literacy is about using emotions effectively. It enables individuals to adapt techniques and skills to manage situations and develop resilience.” (7)

In activating this, CoolFire works from two central principles. The first being - that every action - everything we do - is rooted in a thought. But each thought is rooted within an emotion - a feeling.

**If you consciously change
the feeling
You consciously change the thought
And therefore - consciously change
the action**

CoolFire empowers students to experience that they can be in control of what they are feeling - then learn techniques to enable choices of feeling at any given time. This immediately changes self-perceptions of behaviour and possibilities - and opens the growing realisation that previous spontaneous reactions to frequently overwhelming feelings can be transformed into calm, conscious choic-

es. From an early stage within the CoolFire process, students begin to develop a more objective perspective on their feelings - and therefore thoughts: They become the cause not the effect of their actions in every aspect of learning and personal development.

CoolFire is a complete, holistic approach - working with the “whole” person - and in defining the term “holistic”, the second principle at the heart of CoolFire is also defined: that of seeking to create a synthesis - a balance - of **Mind, Body and Feelings** - within every student and every teacher.

These forces are frequently in conflict - the mind often overriding the other two and triggering defensive physical biochemical reactions that puts the teacher and/or student into a continual “fight-flight” response. This has a direct negative bearing on the ability to teach, learn - and interact at any level. In creating a

Mind-Body-Feelings balance from an early age, CoolFire is creating a continuing state of “energised calm” that will change the way you feel, think, choose, act and relate - for learning, for life...

So how does CoolFire translate principle into practice..?

Flexibility and choice is the initial key for schools to be able to use CoolFire in their own way -

to meet priorities and each school’s Development Plan. CoolFire options include one-day sets of student workshops; one-week whole-school programmes; an intensive workshop series for smaller groups of identified pupils; CoolFire teacher and staff training for holistic wellbeing, personal development - and integrating CoolFire into classroom

teaching; CoolFire Summer Schools; CoolFire Transitions - supporting the move from primary to secondary school; CoolFire for Parents - and more. CoolFire is also very responsive and new workshops and programmes can be created from scratch in response to a school's specific scenario or challenge. CoolFire can work with a single class, a smaller group of identified students, a Year Group or vertically selected group from across several years - and we also work with whole schools - both students and staff. "The CoolFire Effect" can also be tangibly measured through the Goodmans Scale which enables staff to formerly assess and create numerical data relating to the development of a range of "soft skills" such as concentration, relationships, behaviour traits, empathy - and more.

CoolFire : Connect - the whole-school one-week programme highlights both central principles and is a good example of illustrating the many aspects of CoolFire in action.

CoolFire : Connect, enables both students and teachers to directly experience a programme of workshops, activities and training whilst also equipping the school with all it needs to continue to develop, embed and sustain The CoolFire Approach on a long-term basis: and all within a week. All students are introduced to the central themes through the CoolFire - Phase 1 workshop - a fun, lively and dynamic mix of breathwork, movement, visualisation - and more - through which students experience a wide range of physical and emotional states - from

running and shouting to energised calm and stillness. Students of all ages quickly become aware that they can use the CoolFire techniques to consciously channel and direct their energy: when it's time to be still and focussed for example, they can choose to do so. They also make the initial connection between feelings, thought and action - and again, how in turn they can consciously change all three. From being the unconscious participant, each student now starts to become the observer of their own feelings, thoughts, actions and behaviour. Students then develop these perspectives through two further introductory CoolFire workshops that begin to shift awareness from mind to within the body and its vital role - and starting to consciously work with different feelings and emotions: the foundations of the CoolFire holistic framework of

Mind-Body-Feelings.

Throughout the week (and on a continuing basis) each student records their feelings, thoughts and discoveries in their own **CoolFire PowerLog**. This is an integral part of CoolFire as any realisation or discovery arising from the workshops and supporting activities will simply evaporate unless

recorded or processed in some way. This can take the form of writing or a drawing - or multi-media, for example: a video or sound clip. Students can also use one of the nine different CoolFire response sheets that provide a framework for students to express their feelings, thoughts and actions in various scenarios.

Students continue to develop and extend the themes over the week, creating work to display on the school's CoolFire Wall at the end of the week using the CoolFire Classroom Pack. This features teacher-led practical workshops, creative writing and artwork - including creating your own visualisations, further bodywork, personal profiles - and more. The CoolFire Video and Newspaper project Pack also enable student groups to film and report on the week which they then share with the whole school on the concluding day.

The role of Emotional Literacy in Early Years development (aged 3-5) is of paramount importance, and CoolFire introduces a host of colourful characters who guide children through combinations of guided techniques as an integrated part of an unfolding story. Introduced by an especially designed Phase 1 workshop, "**Tommy the Tree**" follows Tommy having fun and adventures with his friends - he's too young to be a "boring old tree". But this gets him into all sorts of problems and he decides he would like to learn to be a tree again. The CoolFire Tommy the Tree Support Pack enables teachers to embed the techniques and routines in the classroom on a regular basis - thereby





working to establish the critical sense of feeling grounded and rooted within each child. This is essential if we are to feel happy and secure - to be able to move our energy and attention downwards into our Solar Plexus, into the base of our spine - and into our legs and feet - to create a strongly rooted base - creating "a right to be". If we ignore such a vital aspect of our emotional, mental and physical development at this early age, then we frequently experience a reversion to "survival" reactions and defensive strategies throughout our entire lives.

Meanwhile, teachers and school staff are using **Creating Calm** - the practical introductory CoolFire workshop - to understand how their emotional, mental and physical state directly affects teaching and learning - and learning techniques themselves to create calm and productive classrooms through fostering their own holistic wellbeing - that in turn - changes their perspectives. For example, teachers often tend to be in a heightened state of attention and readiness which can be easily tilted into a reactive rather than a managing mindset - particularly within student interaction. You don't have to be angry or agitated for the body to produce an adrenal reaction - that takes time to clear; just changing the way both you and your students breathe for example, will directly reduce the intake of carbon dioxide and contributes to stopping a continual fight-flight reaction. There are many other factors that

will produce a cumulative feeling of stress, tension, fatigue and exhaustion in teachers - which **Creating Calm** directly addresses - enabling teaching staff to create and maintain a state of energised calm through an extensive range of practical, therapeutic tools. Students are naturally highly sensitive to the emotional state the teacher is sub-consciously projecting and therefore **Creating Calm's** tools will have an immediate beneficial effect on both teacher and student wellbeing - and therefore teaching and learning.

CoolFire goes on to teach and empower all school staff throughout the week to embed and sustain the CoolFire Approach to Emotional Literacy within everyday teaching and learning on a long-term basis. "Little and Often" is the key to seeing a positive difference in student's focus, motivation and behaviour and teaching staff learn how to use the **CoolFire PowerPack** to deliver daily or regular short classroom-based therapeutic routines and exercises on a continuing basis in registration periods and perhaps very briefly at the start of lessons in order to "switch" emotional states - from "Playground Excitement" to "Ready to Work". This includes the understanding of a mix of background theory and techniques that will enable staff to "mix-and-match" interlocking exercises from six areas such as Breathwork, Visualisation and the like. All will have a positive cumulative effect in as little as two to three weeks and combine to stimulate the parasympathetic side

of the Autonomous Nervous System - the "Rest and Digest" effect - as the foundation for a developing and sustained state of "Energised Calm".

- And all the fun, discoveries and events of the CoolFire : Connect week are shared at the end of the week with Parents - who become directly involved in ongoing CoolFire student development. Students - from the youngest Reception class to the oldest - demonstrate and talk about various aspects of CoolFire and exhibit a wide range of artwork and creative writing. Parents also gain an overview from viewing the CoolFire video and from copies of the CoolFire newspaper - both made by students over the course of the week.

But emphasis is placed on the students demonstrating two particular aspects of CoolFire: the "Morning Energiser" routine and the CoolFire Power Breakfasts. Parents are encouraged to directly get involved and support their children by practising the regular get-out-of-bed exercise routine with them - before preparing one of the quick and tasty Power Breakfasts featured in the CoolFire Power-Log - all with low glycaemic indexes; - meaning that the food releases its energy slowly, thereby sustaining the student throughout the morning.

- And on their continuing CoolFire journey, each school is never alone with continuing help and support available by Skype, email and phone for a whole year.

If desired, CoolFire : Connect schools can draw on a range of fur-



ther CoolFire advanced workshops and resources such as structured lesson formats that enables teachers to explore aspects in more depth with their students. “CoolFire Progress” also gives schools the option of building on Creating Calm by working with us to create individually tailored further staff training - that can frequently mean the creation of new workshops and materials.

All of the elements of CoolFire : Connect can be staged as separate workshops or in various combinations over one or more days according to a school's identified needs and priorities. As previously mentioned, a number of other CoolFire options are available - including “CoolFire Explorer” - the intensive workshop series that works with smaller groups of approximately fifteen students that a school identifies as benefiting from support for a number of issues - for example: confidence/self-esteem, anger management/behaviour, forming relationships, managing feelings - and more. Students are guided through a wide range of therapeutic activities, processing and reflection - including, drama, art and Movement - again - underpinned by each student's personal **CoolFire PowerLog**. CoolFire Explorer has been particularly effective in working with students perceived as “challenging” - and has been directly credited with transforming

“School Refusers” into happy, regular attendees.

In extending the boundaries and applications of Emotional Literacy, The CoolFire Approach continues to demonstrate that academic attainment cannot be separated from personal development - indeed, the two are synonymous. By almost solely concentrating on “thought” and “the mind” as the vehicle for a measurable “progress”, education systems are ignoring the inextricable and vital role of the other two parts of the holistic equation: that of the body and feelings/emotions. CoolFire's holistic shift - from “task” to “person” - enables students and teachers to create sustainable academic attainment through continuing personal development - particularly in being able to consciously and objectively work with the feelings that are driving each thought - and therefore - each action. By integrating CoolFire from an early age, students (and teachers) will develop a perspective of “Energised Calm” that will not only underpin central academic skills - such as concentration, motivation, clear thought and expression - but will also foster a wide range of lifeskills - to be the cause not the effect of all they will come to achieve. CoolFire: for teaching: for learning: for learning for life.

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To see CoolFire in action and download the new CoolFire booklet go to: www.the-lightworks.co.uk

Contact *Dave Read*
read.david2@sky.com