



Qudwa 2017 – Global Teachers' Forum Coffeehouse Sessions

“New Ways to Think about Behaviour – Is Discipline a Dirty Word?”
Sean Bellamy
Saturday, October 7, 2017

Sean started the session by sharing a personal story with the audience: “I sat in a garden in 1987 with 14 teenagers and we designed a school together. Students said they wanted to help design the rules of the school as well. Their experience in other school informed them that there is a more cooperative, democratic way to manage behaviour and it involves trusting that young people want their environments to be safe and creative. Young people have the wisdom and the will to create fair and safe classrooms. They told me that rules stop them thinking about the best ways to behave; that petty rules interfere with relationships and relationships are at the heart of their learning; that they learn just as well in their pajamas, just as well on the floor and corridors are perfect for running down.”

Sean shared 30 statements written by his pupils about punishment, rules and behaviour policies. He asked small groups in the coffeehouse sessions to decide how they would reply to these challenges and insights.

How do you tell a child that their uniform makes them behave better when they behave beautifully in a bathrobe? How do you answer a child who asks you why detention helps him learn or concentrate and what do you say to a child who thinks that only the well-behaved seem to get access to the knowledge that leads to success? Shouldn't we only have rules when we have first decided that we need them?

If schools embrace the idea that education exists to help young people become more complete and capable, then even bad behaviour is a resource for learning.

Teachers should think about two things:

1. Do behaviour policies help children to learn?
2. Do behaviour policies offer children a way to learn about themselves?

Sean also shared his thoughts on Qudwa and the coffeehouse session: “Having their ideas in the room was like having the children present in the room. The responses were fascinating. With so many amazing educators at the conference, I thought it might be useful to consider the things that help us become learners. I was educated at Cambridge University but my education only really began when I discovered choice. Choice is risk. Risk brings learning alive.”





قودة
Q U D W A

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