

NEW RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

In Whitehall and Washington there is talk of war against Iraq. Young men and women have blown themselves up in Netanya; tanks have rumbled through Ramallah and Jenin. The spirals of violence turn endlessly on. How might even a shard of emotional literacy be introduced into such situations?

To propose dialogue as a way forward does not show much understanding of the powerful emotions being experienced on all sides. Nations and groups go to war because they are no longer interested in what the other side might be saying. Classic liberal positions cannot measure up against the human capacity for aggression and malevolence.

And yet bombs clearly do not make the situation better. They may temporarily relieve the aggressor's fear, anger and hate, but only by stoking those same emotions on the other side, provoking further aggression, stoking an endless tit-for-tat. Even when one party is too numb to go on, it will regroup for a further onslaught later.

ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES

We need, therefore, to find ways of enabling all parties in such conflicts to evolve alternative strategies for dealing with the emotions that threaten to overwhelm them. We need to give them a vision of a less destructive, more

sustainable way to achieve security.

A vision of that sort rarely emerges from inside the emotional conflagration created by war. And the sort of devastating 'defeat' that might breed a re-examination of current perspectives is inconceivable. It is, therefore, incumbent on those less caught up in war to foster the belief that something else is possible.

TAKING SIDES

The realities of international terrorism make us feel that there are no sidelines any more. We are driven to manage our fears by aligning ourselves with the group that seems stronger physically, or stronger in its righteousness.

So it is that Britain's leaders have made it quite clear where they stand in the war on terrorism. This is understandable, but also regrettable. It gives the impression that one set of actions is right and the other wrong (whereas in reality they all have different places on a spectrum of considerable moral ambiguity). And it supports one side in the idea that it can win, whereas the reality was conveyed by the philosopher Mary Midgley when she wrote: "It is like trying to swat a swarm of wasps. You may get some satisfaction out of killing a few of them, but you are merely irritating the rest and the disturbance that you make is always liable to bring in new ones."

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CHANGING THE TERMS

What we need are nations and agencies committed to fostering in all sides an appreciation of what is going on for the others; helping them to find ways of overcoming their own fears by seeing how afraid the others are; facilitating the emergence of that degree of courage needed if enemies are to look each other in the eye and listen without flinching to what is being said.

The first lesson to get across is that everyone is in the same emotional boat. International development secretary Clare Short said last November that those who opposed the bombing of Afghanistan were being 'emotional'. The truth is that everybody involved in any war is being emotional, whatever 'side' they may be on.

Recognising this would make it easier for people to give up the conviction that their own fears are responses to the aggressive actions of the other. "You started it", say the Israelis to the Palestinians. "No, you

Recognising the importance of emotional literacy What I did not realise when I started in management was that I was seeking to build emotionally literate teams. I am grateful that I now understand this. People will only be creative if you give them the freedom to take responsibility. Greg Dyke, DG of the BBC

Antidote's next conference *Emotionally Literate Schools: Developing Young People's Curiosity and Motivation* takes place on 16-17 May at Church House, Westminster. Details on the back page and from the Antidote office.

Help us put the Antidote message across. We now have posters for you to put up in your school, workplace or community centre. Call the office and let us know how many you require.

did,” comes back the reply. The truth is that, at this stage in the history of these and other conflicts, it is impossible to identify anyone who ‘started it’. What is clear, though, is that everybody is playing an equivalent role in keeping it going. And claiming moral high ground gets in the way of thinking about the changed assumptions that would be required to ‘finish it’.

A NEW POLITICAL CLASS

It would help politicians to communicate these messages if they were governing an emotionally literate nation in an emotionally literate way; if they were capable of appreciating the emotions that drive their own actions, and of engaging in honest dialogue with the electorate about what needs to be done. We are so far from having such a government that calling for one at this juncture might seem naïve. It suggests we do not recognise that the current brutality can only be ended through protracted haggling, the imposition of UN resolutions and monitoring from the international community.

This should not, though, stop us working for a situation where less costly and more effective mechanisms could be deployed. Evolving solutions through mediation is incredibly tough. While we in Antidote work with schools, businesses and other organisations to create an environment in which an emotionally literate political class can emerge, we need also to be developing in other ways people who are capable of using emotional literacy to tackle the sources of murderous violence.



CONFERENCE REPORT

positive change requires us all to change

If government ministers want to see a transformation in our hospitals, schools and other public services, they need to start by changing themselves. This was the strongest message to come out of our recent *Change is Possible* conference.

Real change can only happen when we give up using the sort of instrumental thinking whose limitations were illustrated at the conference by Greg Dyke, the BBC's Director General. He was describing the days he had spent dressed up as a porter in the Whittington Hospital's A&E Department, as part of his research into the Patient's Charter.

“One Friday night,” he reported, “a baby was born in the car park; a guy came in and thumped one of the nurses; then someone else came in drunk, swallowed a pile of drugs and started abusing people.” Dyke reflected on the absurdity of asking the staff who dealt with these situations whether they had “met their Charter Standards”.

“What I said in my report,” he continued, “was that you have no chance of reforming the National Health Service unless you can get the staff back on your side. Politicians have

difficulty understanding that. They still believe that, if you instruct people to do something, they will do it.”

Paul Corrigan, Special Adviser to Health Secretary Alan Milburn, made a similar point. For decades, he observed, management theorists have agreed that authoritarianism does not work. Yet it remains most people's ‘default mechanism’. There is still “a lot more loud shouting going on than loud listening”.

DEVOLUTION AND CENTRALISATION

A week before the conference, Tony Blair cheered up some with a speech that was taken to indicate a change in his attitude to public services. “If,” he declared, “you are on the side of the people who use public services, you should be on the side of the people who work in public services.”

There was, though, no apology for the brusque tone of some previous remarks. Consequently, the speech left the really big question unanswered: if you believe simultaneously in centralisation and decentralisation, where is the point at which one belief gives way to the other? When does impatience for results lead you to ignore the need for dialogue?

Participants argued that prescribing targets and imposing sanctions on those who fail to achieve them does not work. To say that is not to question the importance of improving services. It is to say that you need dialogue and participation to achieve this.

You hear a lot about change agents, and about driving change. You get a lot of change imposed. To me, the most important thing to remember about change is that it has to start with me, not with you.
Victor Gallant

We are all a bit like goldfish. We swim along one side of the tank being a parent; we turn the corner and become car users; then we turn the corner again and want people to think about social care. We have got to stop being goldfish. We have got to think about all the beliefs we hold.

Lin Homer, CE Suffolk CC, *Change is Possible* Conference

The commonly-held view that talk is the antithesis of action ignores the complexity of the dynamics within any organisation (or community). Enthusiasm for change comes when people in every part of an organisation can share what they observe, experience and know. As this starts to happen, the information needed for positive change to happen can flow to the places where it enables people to work out for themselves what needs to be done and how it can be achieved.

Change becomes possible, therefore, when those who have power focus less attention on the targets being sought than on the quality of the conversations that need to happen if people are to unite in achieving change. The conference identified three elements that contribute to making this happen:

1. UNDERSTANDING

People will only participate in a creative and constructive way if they are given

access to the information they need to understand the drivers behind whatever decisions are being made.

The best way of informing people is by provide them with opportunities to take an active part in discussions about what needs to be done. Sue Grant, who is a neighbourhood development officer in Haringey, spoke of the enormous improvements in street cleanliness that had been achieved when a colleague invited members of the local 'clean team' to contribute their ideas to a breakfast meeting. They had never received such an invitation before.

2. CONFIDENCE

If people are to contribute, they need the confidence to express their views. This is most likely to happen when they know that those who listen to them are confident enough to hear what is being said. As Sandra Shears from Suffolk's Sure Start observed, "When you listen

to people, they say things you do not expect them to say."

Speaking to this theme, Suffolk County Council's chief executive Lin Homer reported the exhilaration experienced by a lollipop lady who had been given the opportunity to articulate her ideas on social care, education and the state of footpaths in her area. "I felt like a whole person today," she reported, "I felt as if every aspect of my personality was being used."

3. RESPONSIBILITY

"You don't," Homer went on, "actually make a difference until you understand that there is something about *you* that can be different." Change starts to happen when people can acknowledge their own part in the situations they are seeking to shift.

That is why officers and elected officials need to put themselves in contexts where they can achieve some degree of objectivity about their own behaviour. Victor Gallant, an executive director of North Tyneside Council at the time of the conference, described what he had learned about himself from taking part in action learning sets. Andrew Bailey, communication consultant for BT Talkworks, reported that those who undergo the dialogue audit he has developed almost always start out over-estimating their capacity to communicate.

These three components of change all require high levels of emotional openness and honesty. Elected officials and councillors need to work out ways to start understanding each others' point of view. Managers need to find a way of telling each other what irritates



them about each others' attitudes and behaviours. Frustrated citizens need to know how to complain constructively. None of these things can happen unless organisations create opportunities for people to articulate their thoughts and feelings about what needs to change.

MEETING THE BLOCKS

What can anyone do, though, when those in authority refuse to reflect upon the quality of their listening? "My own struggle," said one conference participant, "is that I have not got the persuasive skills to convince the people in power that there is a different way of working which would be more effective. I find it difficult to get in the place where they are at and to draw them towards me."

Victor Gallant urged a strategic approach: "Be realistic. Find people who are positive about change. Develop an alliance, ideally at different levels and in different parts of the organisation. Work with your allies to develop a richer understanding of what needs to be done and how it can be done."

Change is often hard work, but several speakers observed that "joy" comes from seeing things start to shift. Antidote's objective in taking forward the conference discussions will be to help ensure that such joy becomes a much more common experience.

We would like to thank BT and Serco for sponsoring the conference. You can listen to the conference talks, and download the brochure, from the lectures online archive on www.btinterface.co.uk



We are collecting stories of people's successes and setbacks establishing emotional literacy in different settings. Send them to Antidote, or go to Storyfinder on the website – www.antidote.org.uk

PROJECT REPORT

making the case for more emotionally literate schools

Antidote's researcher Alice Haddon describes how Antidote's *Emotional Literacy Handbook*, to be published this autumn, will present our argument for the importance of emotional literacy to educational achievement.

"If I had the chance to run my school for a day, I'd firstly put the head teacher in the caretaker's position! Then I'd put my own teacher in a state where she knows how a year six pupil feels [preparing] for SATs."¹

Fatima, aged eleven, has a very clear idea of what her school should be like. Her desire to see the head teacher in a different role will be familiar to many. There is however, something else that Fatima is calling for; she wants those who teach her to know what she is feeling.

We can never truly feel what someone else is feeling, but we do have the capacity to explore and reflect on our own emotional experiences, and those of others, so that a different kind of mutual understanding becomes possible. It is this capacity, our emotional literacy, that enables us to learn from and with each other.

Ever since Antidote ran its conference on *Emotional Development and the School Curriculum* five years ago, the question of how schools can foster emotional literacy has been at the heart of our work. This handbook,

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funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and aimed at teachers, parents and policy-makers, will bring together what we have learnt.

THE ARGUMENT

Neurobiological research shows that we have a greater number of neural fibres projecting from our brain's emotion centre into the logical, rational centres than we having going the other way. This means that our emotions are a powerful determinant of how we think and act. In any given context, emotions are exerting a strong influence on our attention, memory and learning.

For the most part, young people are curious and want to learn. The challenge for our schools is to create the conditions in which their curiosity can grow. We will argue that it is necessary to pay explicit attention to the emotional, as well as the intellectual, dimensions of learning if we are to create educational environments that enable all young people to become engaged with, and curious about, learning.

The handbook will bring together research, case studies and practical suggestions from all levels of education, to show that the process of learning and teaching is as important as the content. By creating the conditions in which open dialogue becomes possible, the blocks that inhibit motivation, curiosity and collaboration can be dissolved, releasing the energy needed for individuals to realise their potential.

THE MAIN OBSTACLE

One of the most common emotional blocks to learning is anxiety. Whether anxiety results from the pressure to

We are putting together a report on how emotional literacy can contribute to positive change in public services. If you have ideas, research or case studies to share with us, please contact Roger Sutcliffe at Antidote - roger@antidote.org.uk

The annual conference of the Values Education Council (VEC) will take place at the Create Centre in Bristol on 5th October. The theme is *Sustainable Learning*.

perform, achieve academically or meet the expectations of peers, it is extremely difficult to learn or teach when it takes hold. To release this block, we need to attend to the anxiety. By attending to it, we can begin to understand it. By exploring it with others, we can begin to reflect on how it affects us and those around us. As a consequence, feelings are able to emerge into consciousness and inform, rather than control, our thoughts and actions. It is by connecting our emotional and our cognitive aspects that we become more able to make sense of the world around us, experience a sense of personal agency and relate to others in positive ways. In Fatima's words, we become able to know how others feel as well as knowing how we ourselves feel.

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other. Communicating in this way makes collaboration possible. It enables young people to share with their teachers responsibility for the educational process, to become empowered and motivated.

Dialogue encourages young people to bring together their subjective and objective experience in a way that allows them to think about what they are learning, and to connect it in a meaningful way to what they already know, feel and value. Learning in this way enables them to engage with the diversities and complexities that exist in their lives and schools.

BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL

Emotional literacy can be practised in any area of the school curriculum. To have a full impact, it needs to become integrated into the policies and strategies adopted across a school or learning organisation. The handbook will discuss how learning and achievement, both academic and personal, is maximised when the ethos of the school supports the individuals within it to fulfil their potential.

There cannot be any prescribed strategy for achieving this. The handbook will, though, discuss how different methods can contribute to this goal. It will explore the importance of engaging with the families of young people and the wider community. It will then go on to look at ways of extending the dialogue outwards to

encompass all those interested in the education of young people.

ALSO....

The handbook will include a directory of useful resources, together with the contact details of many organisations that are committed to the well being, health and emotional literacy of all those involved in education.

A first draft of the main section of the handbook will be available at the Antidote conference on Emotionally Literate Schools taking place at Church House, Westminster in May (16th-17th). We will respond to suggestions and comments from conference participants and go on to publish the final draft in the autumn.

If you have any ideas, suggestions or stories that you think would enrich the handbook, please contact Alice Haddon on 0207 247 3355 or by e-mail to alice@antidote.org.uk

¹ Taken from BBC Online, Newsround, 'How you would run your school', 27 April 2001

FOSTERING EMOTIONAL LITERACY THROUGH DIALOGUE

Through narratives, the handbook will show some of the ways in which emotional literacy can be fostered in schools, and explore how this becomes possible in any situation where there are two or more people willing to engage with each other.

The essential component of this engagement is dialogue. Open dialogue can develop when there is a spirit of mutual enquiry, interest and respect. This allows people to speak about their experiences in a way that promotes emotional and cognitive understanding and broadens the range of conversations they can have with each

letting young people discover how clever they really are

Calum Campbell describes how he set about persuading a group of demoralised young people that they were capable of doing much more.

“I can’t f###in write because I’m stupid!”

This was definitely not the response I had hoped for when outlining the first activity for the group of students I would be working with over the coming year.

At the time, I was working as a self-employed teacher and educational consultant. I had taken on a contract in an East London school where I would be teaching Maths and English to a group of 18 year six students. They had all been identified as very low achievers, and were expected to achieve the same results as five-to-seven year olds by the time they left school at eleven.

These students had been grouped together to create an extra ‘set’, because it was felt by the school that this was the most effective way of meeting their needs. My brief was to provide them with the support and experiences that

would allow them to develop as confident, considerate and critically thinking, independent learners.

The students were performing well below what could be expected of people their age. It did not take long to realise that, although there were some learning difficulties to be taken into account, the major factor in their underperformance was overwhelming lack of self-esteem.

TACKLING NEGATIVITY

Initially, I was astounded by the negativity shown by the students regarding their academic abilities and other aspects of life in general. For example, I told them about my father. He served in the army and had the motto, “When you’re on your knees you’re only half way down.” I asked them what he might mean by this. The reply from one student was, “When everything is going really bad, and you think things are terrible, it can get even worse.” This answer left me speechless. I had never before considered such a negative perspective.

My first action was to ensure that the classroom provided the most positive working environment possible. To achieve this, I started by organising the tables into a conference U shape. This allowed for ease of communication, and the set-up could be changed very easily if we did want to work in groups for a particular activity. I put up

inspiring quotes on the walls and made sure that there were high-quality numeracy and literacy-based teaching displays to hand.

RELUCTANCE TO BE CHALLENGED

Initially, the students were very reluctant to attempt anything they considered challenging, new or requiring sustained concentration. Issues such as having the longest pencil, being looked at by someone, sitting with friends and the sharing of resources proved to be constant and major distractions to learning. Even though such issues may be considered rather petty, they held great importance for the students in the group. I felt that, to create the best possible conditions for learning, we would first have to tackle the emotions that were proving to be barriers to moving forward.

DISCUSSING FEELINGS

With this in mind, we spent time as a class, and on an individual basis, discussing our feelings and how these can influence our behaviour and performance in both positive and negative ways. We focused on specific negative situations that we were experiencing, and explored the emotions that were influencing and being influenced at these times. This included strategies to deal with emotionally charged situations and recognise and prioritise issues involved in a situation. A very clear and fair behaviour policy, which encouraged personal responsibility and awareness, supported this.

In contrast to what I took to be the trend in education at the time, I decided to slow the pace of teaching and aim for deep involvement, understanding and enjoyment. We discussed the philosophy behind education, and how this relates to individuals. We used the Philosophy for Children approach and asked ‘big’ academic questions such as “What is mathematics?”, spending our first week together discussing and exploring this. Everything we did was related to real life situations, and learning in general, to ensure that we all understood the

value and relevance of what we were undertaking. The Mathematics and English strategies were used as a base for teaching (see www.dfes.gov.uk), and a range of stimulating resources and activities were chosen to support them. We also focused a great deal upon problem-solving strategies, and discussed how this related to challenges in everyday life and also school tests, including the SATs.

RESULTS

Everybody was encouraged to push themselves as much as possible to improve their performance, and in some cases this required intervention and support to allow individuals to understand the value, importance and consequences of taking risks in learning. We were all encouraged to examine our own learning to realise our strengths and be honest about our weaknesses, whilst recognising the personal strength required when carrying out such reflection.

Feedback regarding work was given sensitively, openly and honestly, although this initially proved to be quite hard to face up to at times. No stickers were ever awarded in the class and praise was only given where it was deserved. This meant that students were not misled about their efforts and were therefore aware of the challenges facing them. Praise had more value when it was presented in such a mature and honest manner as it linked in with the aims of improving our learning. Also, this focus, and the fact that the students' life experiences resulted in their being very street wise, meant that they would soon be able to see through any empty praise.

This resulted in students being able to evaluate their own work in a very honest and effective manner. They knew better than anyone else if they were really putting their best efforts into what they were doing. A great deal

of support was required for this to become a feature of our learning, as many of the students held such negative views about their capabilities. Recognising just how big a step to take with each individual was a constant issue, as it would have been very easy to damage any gains in confidence by extending people beyond their academic or emotional limits.

LEARNING TO CO-OPERATE

Over time, students also shared their work with the class and helped each other evaluate what they had produced. Feedback always included ways to improve work, which gave everybody the chance to use their new skills to help others. This was generally carried out as a class at the end of a session or module and also by myself through written comments in books. All students were given time before starting any new tasks to read comments relating to their previous work. Combining this with

the self-evaluative approach meant that testing was kept to a minimum.

Students who had finished their tasks were encouraged to look back through their own books to see how their work was developing, and then help others if this was appropriate.

We discussed ways in which we could really help others to understand concepts or processes whilst taking their feelings into account.

EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER

The entire year was an emotional rollercoaster, and challenged us all. For the first eight weeks or so, I had to be very aware of how my emotions were being influenced by the daily challenges. During this period it was very easy to become disillusioned and begin to doubt the worth in what I was doing with the students. I am very glad to say that, by the end of our time together, all of the students significantly exceeded the expectations

previously held by teachers or themselves. When they undertook the SATs tests, some outperformed students in the highest ability class. One student actually stated that her good marks were the best thing that had ever happened to her.

The massive gains in confidence were undoubtedly the most important influence in improving academic performance. Even though I had always been honest if asked about my personal beliefs regarding the irrelevance and unimportance of the SAT results to their lives and real learning, it was very encouraging to see how pleased the students were with their results.

CONCLUSION

This experience once again proved what a crucial role emotions play in education and in life more generally. If state educational provision is to truly meet the immediate and longer-term needs of citizens, then we need to allocate financial and practical support to improving young people's emotional literacy.

You can find out more about philosophy for children from Sapere, the Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education - www.sapere.net

Calum Campbell is now working part-time with the Cumbria Education for Development Centre, and also as a supply teacher in the NorthWest. He can be contacted via mail@calum.campbell.com

In contrast to what I took to be the trend in education at the time, I decided to slow the pace of teaching and aim for deep involvement, understanding and enjoyment.

antidote news

Welcoming New People

Alice Haddon joined Antidote as our researcher in June last year. She is working with the Graduate School of Education in Bristol on the evaluation of the Emotional Literacy Initiative, and also exploring emotional literacy in education more generally. Her e-mail is alice@antidote.org.uk

Susie King is co-ordinating the marketing of Antidote's events and services, while also building relationships with existing members and engaging with new ones. Her email is emotional.literacy@antidote.org.uk

Our Move to Aldgate

We moved to Aldgate in November from our rather cramped offices in Aldgate. We are now neighbours of the IT training company Happy Computers and its on-line offshoot Learnfish. Our new address is below.

New Members wanted for the Management Committee

Antidote's management committee is looking for new members. The existing team has identified a need for more people with completer-finisher qualities, particularly if they have experience of project management, marketing or fundraising. We are interested in recruiting people with close knowledge of the Asian and African cultures represented in the East London communities where we are working. Anyone interested in joining the committee should contact James Park at the address below or by e-mail to james@antidote.org.uk.

Handbook

We have delayed publication of the Handbook until the autumn so that those taking part in our May conference can share with us their thoughts on the current draft (which will also be sent to all current members). You can read more about the book on pages 4-5 inside. Please do send any comments and suggestions you may have to Alice Haddon.

dates for your diary

16 - 17 MAY

Emotionally Literate Schools

A participative opportunity for adults and young people to look at how primary and secondary schools can enhance the quality of learning by improving emotional climate. Drawing on narratives from Tuckswold First School, Buckingham Middle, Cotham Community School and Westborough High School. Forum theatre facilitated by Theatr Fforwm Cymru.

speakers: Baroness Catherine Ashton (DfES), Judy Sebba (DfES), Michael Fielding (U. of Sussex), Tamsyn Imison, Sue Nicholson (Mason Moor Primary) Bernadette Thompson (Gallions School), Martin Buck & Lesley Day (Lister Community School)

venue: Church House, Westminster
enquiries to Susie King, Antidote

25-31 MAY

Conflict and Transformation

An opportunity to learn from each other, integrate hard-won lessons from the field and address conflict as a dynamic and meaningful part of the process of transformation and healing.

speakers: Mo Mowlam MP, Scilla Elworthy (Oxford Research Group), Louise Diamond (Peacetech), Ch. Sup. John Wilson (Police National Operations Faculty)

venue: Findhorn Foundation, Forres, Scotland

enquiries to conference@findhorn.org

15 - 19 JUNE

Changing Minds

Hear leading players in thinking from around the world and learn about different approaches for developing children's thinking and reasoning skills.

speakers: Edward De Bono, Howard Gardner, Carol McGuinness

venue: Harrogate

enquiries to www.changing-minds.org.uk

20-23 JUNE

Cooperative Learning and Responsible Citizenship

Small-group and experiential sessions, base-group meetings and whole-conference activities organised by the International Association for the Study of Cooperation in Education.

venue: UMIST, Manchester
enquiries to www.iasce.net

21 - 22 JUNE

PSHE and Citizenship

Bringing together the leading ideas in PSHE and Citizenship; sharing good practice in schools; enthusing and exciting you with the message that PSHE and Citizenship are fundamental to the real education of all our children.

speakers: Peter Sharp (Mouchel), Jenny Mosley (Quality Circle Time), Penny Moon (The Cheiron Trust), Elaine Abbott (University of the First age), Harriet Goodman (Antidote)

venue: Milton Keynes

enquiries to 01526 353678 (tel)

5-7 JULY

The Blossoming Brain

The annual conference of SEAL (Society for Effective Affective Learning) will explore practical approaches to holistic learning for teachers, parents and carers of young learners.

contact: SEAL, tel: 020 8365 3869, seal@saffirepress.co.uk

5 OCTOBER

Sustainable Learning

The annual conference of VEC (The Values Education Council) will look at how curiosity and commitment to learning can be sustained over time.

venue: The Create Centre, Bristol
enquiries to Susie King, Antidote, emotional.literacy@antidote.org.uk

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