ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM

An I.N.T.O. Publication

I.N.T.O.
Serving Education

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Ard Runaí
An Seanadóir Joe O’Toole
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Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a person thinks of her/himself, that it is which determines . . . her/his fate.

Walden Thoreau (1854)
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FOREWORD

This report on self-esteem which contains the results of a survey of INTO members on the subject confirms and endorses International Research and the widespread view that there is a strong correlation between high self-esteem and intellectual, social and emotional success or achievement.

The report as well as reviewing some of the international literature on the topics defines self-esteem and looks at the role of parents and teachers in enhancing children's self-esteem.

The findings of the survey of INTO members conducted as part of this report show that teachers overwhelmingly accept the importance of self-esteem in the education process and believe that it is essential that teachers and parents work together to enhance self-esteem especially amongst those children who have a low self-concept. I am confident that this report will initiate an important debate within the education service among teachers, parents, management and the Department of Education and will contribute to the development of policies and practice that will enrich the lives of both teachers and their pupils.

The Organization wishes to pay tribute to the Equality Committee for raising awareness amongst members on this important topic and for their vital contribution to this important report.

The INTO issued questionnaires to approximately 1,500 teachers and 661 (44%) completed questionnaires were received in time for analysis. The organization wishes to thank all of the teachers who took the time to complete the questionnaire.

The INTO wishes to acknowledge the central role played by the Equality Officer, Ms Anne McElduff, in guiding and directing this publication.
Equally, the Organization wishes to acknowledge the expertise and
detailed research conducted by Ms Annette Dolan, Executive Officer, in
preparing the document.

The Organization also wishes to thank Mr Peter Mullan for his help and
Ms Naomi Cassidy, INTO staff, who was responsible for typesetting the
document.

I am confident that the issues raised in this report will underpin future
discussion on self-esteem.

Senator Joe O'Toole

General Secretary

April 1995
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Open many recent educational publications, turn on the television or radio and you are likely to find references to self-esteem. One might wonder why it is that self-esteem suddenly seems to have become the "buzz word" at the end of the 20th century. Perhaps it is because it is perceived to be the key to building a successful business, the essential ingredient in making a million, a recipe for personal happiness or even a factor in a successful marriage. Yet in spite of its universality in educational and other literature, there appears to be little agreement on a definition of "self-esteem".

This chapter will examine self-esteem in general, highlighting the link between self-esteem and equal opportunities and self-esteem and assertiveness.

Subsequent chapters will consider:

- the philosophical and psychological origins of self-esteem;
- the influence of parents and teachers in developing children's self-esteem;
- teachers' and parents' own self-esteem levels;
- the enhancement of self-esteem in children;
- enhancing self-esteem within the school environment; and
- an analysis of teachers' attitudes towards the enhancement of self-esteem in primary schools.

The final chapter draws conclusions and makes recommendations.

Self-esteem enriches all aspects of life by facilitating people to have positive feelings about themselves, to have increased personal output and satisfactory interpersonal relationships. Individuals who have positive feelings about themselves are more capable of defining goals and objectives, identifying strengths and dealing with disappointments. They are
also more willing to accept responsibility, they view mistakes as essential to the process of growth and development and are personally motivated. They partake freely in collaborative action and have more positive social relationships.

The quality of an individual’s social relationships will depend on how an individual evaluates himself/herself. In the school situation this has implications for the quality of relationships between teachers, principals, parents and pupils.

People respond in completely different ways to events in their lives according to their level of self-esteem. Research, as outlined later in Chapter 2, shows that high self-esteem can help individuals to cope with either success or failure, triumphs or disappointments. It has been shown that teacher/pupil relationships can be conducive to either raising or reducing pupils’ levels of self-esteem. High self-esteem contributes positively towards both academic achievement and personal and social development. Teachers are central to both processes.

Teaching and developing self-esteem in children is not as simple as instruction in a particular skill or technique, or researching a history or science topic where a student just has to go to the library and locate relevant information. Neither can self-esteem enhancement be taught from a book. Most importantly, adults themselves should have an appropriate level of self-esteem before they can attempt to raise the self-esteem of children.

Adults also must be conscious that stereotyping can have the effect of applying limits to potential achievement and thereby to the level of self-esteem, either a male or female student can attain.

SELF-ESTEEM AS AN ASPECT OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Awareness of the importance of promoting equal opportunities and a determination to eliminate sex stereotyping is essential in the promotion of positive self-esteem in schools. The Green Paper on Education, Education for a Changing World, states that “Education . . . must contribute to the breakdown of stereotypes, to opening up of opportunities, and to the growth and self-esteem of all, irrespective of sex.”

2
Yet, research has shown that boys receive more attention in co-educational class settings. It has been found that teachers:

- give boys more opportunities to answer questions than girls;
- ask boys more higher order questions;
- devote more classroom time to praising and criticising boys for their work;
- differentiate the type of help they give to boys and girls; and
- spend a greater amount of time correcting boys for misbehaviour.

It is important that teachers' interaction with pupils is not determined by the pupils' gender as differential teacher interaction can influence the development of pupils' self-concepts and eventually pupils' achievements. In sex-stereotyped homes and schools boys and girls grow up with different expectations. "Boys are expected to be adept in maths, to be mechanical and physically strong, girls are expected to be adept in language skills, to learn to cook and to . . . preen and be pretty". History provides ample evidence that the expectations of society for boys were those which led to a greater sense of competence than the traditional expectations for girls.

The effect of sex stereotyping is that boys and girls are conditioned to fit into certain moulds which serve to limit their potential as individuals. Research has shown that girls regard themselves as possessing lower ability than boys which in turn may be augmented by pupil-teacher interactions. Lack of achievement in boys is often attributed to misbehaviour or laziness, which does not undermine belief in their ability. Girls on the other hand are more often criticised for the quality of their work in a way which reduces their self-image.

The promotion of equality of opportunity is important because it is concerned with the overall development of self, enabling each individual to reach his/her full potential in all areas of life. It is, therefore, limiting the potential of the individual if boys or girls are treated differently because they are boys and girls rather than because of their individual needs.

There is a link between the development of self-esteem and the promotion of equal opportunities. By incorporating the promotion of both in all classroom activity, one is actively supporting the development of the individual to his/her full potential.
SELF-ESTEEM AND ASSERTIVENESS

Self-esteem and assertiveness are inextricably linked. Self-esteem has its foundation in a "strong sense of self-worth which survives both failure and success; it survives mistakes, disappointment, and most of all self-esteem survives acceptance and rejection from others". In a sense assertiveness may be regarded as a manifestation of high self-esteem.

Persons with high self-esteem accept themselves as they are with their strengths and weaknesses. The more individuals come to terms with their limitations, the more they are willing to listen to other people's criticism and learn from it, even to the extent of risking change. High self-esteem also manifests itself in a feeling of confidence about personal value. Such individuals are unrestricted towards love and acceptance from others. However, if they experience rejection they are not undermined because their self-esteem helps them to cope with that rejection and subsequent disappointment. If individuals are not accepted they can stand back and objectively balance the desirability of obtaining the approval of others against the importance of doing what they want to do. Similarly persons who are assertive will be aware and convinced that not only do other individuals have needs, rights and something to contribute but that they themselves have too.

Persons who are assertive, are able to express their requirements, desires, opinions and feelings in clear, direct, honest and appropriate ways. Such individuals are also able to stand up for their rights without contravening the rights of others. The ultimate aim of assertive behaviour is not a win/lose situation but a win/win situation where the requirements and needs of both parties involved in a situation are satisfied. In this way assertive individuals are fair and honest to themselves and are thus more able and willing to establish more effective working relationships.

Individuals who are assertive have been characterized as being able to:

- acknowledge that individuals deserve respect;
- be aware that person and behaviour are different;
- be expressive of facts;
- state wants, feelings and requests openly;
• be aware that their non-verbal communications support their verbal communication;
• criticise the behaviour of the person rather than the person;
• have the confidence to state wants and feelings openly; and
• actively look for solutions.8

The link between the above outlined examples of assertiveness and high self-esteem will be reinforced further as the traits and characteristics of self-esteem are elaborated upon in this report.
CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF SELF-ESTEEM

ORIGIN OF THE CONCEPT
A historical account of the origin of self-esteem is outlined in R.B. Burns “The Self-Concept”.1 He traces the importance of an individual acquiring self-knowledge back at least as far as Socrates who stated that “the unexamined life was not worth living”.2 The theory of “self” has been a focus of individuals, primarily as a philosophical and theological concern, down through the centuries. However, early writings referring to the individuality of the person were mainly concerned with a very unclearly defined and vague concept of self which was loosely equated with such metaphysical concepts as “soul”, “will” and “spirit”. It was not until the 17th century that a new interpretation, emphasising the importance of self in consciousness, was put forward by Descartes with the philosophy “cogito ergo sum” (I think, therefore I am).

A brief review of the literature suggests that a scientific consideration of self first came to the fore only in the latter part of the 19th century when it emerged as a psychological issue promoted by the writings of William James. From a psychological point of view, a number of perspectives have contributed to an understanding of self-concept theory. James puts forward the notion of the global-self which comprises four components. These when placed in descending order of their implication for self-esteem are spiritual self, material self, social self and bodily self. The four selves, according to James, combine in unique ways to establish each person’s view of themselves which cannot be neatly split up.

James’s principle of self-esteem, known more commonly as James’s Law, may be stated as follows:

“With no attempt there can be no failure, with no failure no humiliation. So our self-feeling in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and to do. It is determined
by the ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities; a
fraction of which our pretensions are the denominator and the
numerator our success.”

The pioneers of American social psychology, Cooley and Mead, described
the ‘self’ as a social organism formed by appraisal reflected from other
persons. Cooley introduced the theory of “the looking glass self”, stating
that one’s self-concept is significantly influenced by what the individual
considers others think of him/her. The mirror, in other words, reflects the
imagined evaluations of others about an individual. “Each to each a
looking glass reflects the other that doth pass”. Cooley believed that there
is a connection between self-awareness and the imagined opinions of
others. For instance if someone is about to give a public presentation they
may be quite tense and “on edge”, due to the fact that they are more
concerned about what others may think of them rather than the task at
hand.

Mead expanded on James’s social theory of self and further developed
Cooley’s theory to devise a more comprehensive theory of self-develop­
ment. He stated that individuals develop an attitude towards themselves
which is consistent with those expressed by others in the world. In other
words, individuals value themselves as others value them and reject them­
selves to the degree that others demean or exclude them. He suggested
that each individual has numerous social identities which afford a major
link between self and society. For example a person can be a son, father,
husband, teacher, neighbour, actor and sports-coach. For Mead, the self
and society are inseparable.

Goffman stated that the individual, depending on the role one has to play,
actually puts on a show for others by directing the impressions one
imparts to others about oneself. Like Mead, Goffman considered self and
society to be inseparable but for Goffman, the individual and society
interact in short scenes where the person recites his/her lines to the end of
the play. However, when the play is over the individual takes off one
costume and dresses himself/herself up in another. Shakespeare’s “As You
Like It”, reflects a similar view of the interaction of the individual with
society in the lines “All the world’s a stage and all the men and women
merely players”. 
Erickson believed that identity of self stems both from biological and cultural backgrounds, with a degree of nurturing from parents and significant others. However, it also comprises internalisation with regard to how individuals believe other people view them. Unlike Freud who was convinced that the experiences of a child during the earliest years of life were of utmost importance, Erickson’s contention was that personality development occurs throughout the entire life cycle, and consists of eight stages of development, each of which are described in dichotomies of positive and negative factors—desirable characteristics inclined to encourage the development of a person who enjoys a rich, full life, along with dangers likely to lead to various types of mental illness.

Rogers’ theory of personality places the self at its core as the director of destiny. He suggests that persons should be self-actualising, continually striving to achieve their own potential. For him the continual objective for individuals is to be true to their own feelings and not those of others. If this is to be achieved, individuals need unconditional positive regard which boosts the growth of the self.

Maslow in his studies of the self was particularly interested in the process of self-actualisation. He suggested that people cannot behave in a self-actualising way unless certain lower levels of need are gratified.

Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs.
An individual cannot possibly expect to have all their needs fulfilled all of the time by home/school/work but if the needs of each stage are not satisfied by some aspects of the person's life, the resultant effect is that the person will be unable to progress to the next level towards self-fulfilment.

This is borne out by the INTO Report "Poverty and Educational Disadvantage" which cites research indicating that poverty adversely effects physical as well as mental health. The report states that high levels of anxiety and stress, ill-health and lower life expectancy, feelings of isolation, lack of control and a sense of stigma have been shown to be part of the experience of poverty.11

Maslow also states in his hierarchy of human needs that basic needs must be met before they can acquire a positive level of self-esteem. He outlines the following stages of progression towards self-esteem and self-actualization:

**Stage 1:** Every individual requires food, warmth and shelter. In the school situation it is important to note to what extent lack of provision of basic needs is influencing a child's learning and behaviour.

**Stage 2:** Every person requires a safe and secure environment in the home/classroom/workplace and in the playground/football club/tennis club, etc. Any degree of physical/verbal/emotional abuse, verbal or physical bullying or harassment establishes a high degree of unsafety.

**Stage 3:** All rational persons want to be loved, accepted and feel a sense of belonging. Those who don't feel a sense of loneliness and isolation.

**Stage 4:** Individuals need a positive sense of self-esteem in order to feel good about themselves.

**Stage 5:** In order to attain the stage of self-actualisation people require opportunities to develop inner talents and potential. Within the school context this can be encouraged by giving children opportunities for problem solving and self-directed learning.
In the past researchers were not very clear in communicating their findings, adding to the lack of consensus in terms of a definition of self-concept or self-esteem. This appears to be confirmed by the researchers English and English\textsuperscript{12} who, having surveyed the literature, highlighted over a thousand different combinations and uses of definitions/terms in the area of self-concept. They found that the same terms sometimes referred to different things and that at other times, terms such as self concept, self-esteem or self-image were used interchangably.

UNDERSTANDING THE TERM SELF-ESTEEM

According to one researcher\textsuperscript{13} self-esteem refers to at least four different component processes. Firstly categorisation refers to persons placing themselves into a number of different categories in terms of their social roles and personality "traits", a process carrying with it certain cultural expectations; the second aspect of self-concept is concerned with the evaluation of that social role; the comparative dimension is the third aspect of self-concept which refers to quantifiable qualities such as intelligence, physical ability, musical ability, etc. This comparative dimension affords persons the opportunity to rank themselves in comparison to others; and the fourth aspect of self-concept refers to the affective state or global feeling of self-worth. This aspect of self-concept is what is more commonly known as self-esteem.

The term self-esteem is now becoming more universally recognised. It is usually used with reference to evaluations that individuals make and retain of themselves. It incorporates attitudes of approval or disapproval and the degree to which people feel valuable, capable significant and competent.

James stated that "it is the position which a person holds in the world contingent on his success or failure that determines self-esteem", while Cooley's theory of the "looking glass self" suggested that the individual is influenced to a considerable degree by what s/he believes others think of him/her.

Lawrence\textsuperscript{14} defines self-esteem in the context of self-concept. He suggests that self-concept is an umbrella term encompassing self-image (what the
person is), ideal-self (what the person would like to be) and self-esteem (what the person feels about the discrepancy between what one is and what one would like to become).

He suggests that to understand the term self-concept one needs to ask oneself the question “Who am I?” several times. A person’s self-image is revealed by answers such as:

I am Mary Brown.
I am a woman.
I am a teacher.
I am five foot five inches tall.

Additional questioning will necessitate the individual giving additional information about himself/herself. For instance an individual’s level of self-esteem is revealed by responses such as:

I am clever.
I am good looking.
I am successful.
I am often sad.
I am loveable.

Ideal-self is suggested by responses such as:

I would like to be able to play golf.
I would like to lose two stone.
I would like to be able to speak confidently in public.

Coopersmith regards self-esteem as “the evaluation that the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to him/herself. It expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which the individual believes him/herself to be capable, significant and worthy”.

The definitions outlined above all suggest that an individual’s level of self-esteem is determined largely by the feedback received from the social environment, including home and school. It is important to note that all the beliefs and images which persons hold as an integral part of their self-
concept were not an inherent component of an individual's self concept at birth. We were all born with certain describable physical characteristics and untapped potential but no one was born with fully formed conceptualisations that s/he is intelligent or stupid, ugly or good looking, extrovert or introvert. Most of the images and beliefs which we hold about ourselves as adults were acquired prior to adulthood. The origin of our self-concept stems from how others treated us and what they informed us about ourselves. Infants, form a general impression with regard to whether they are loved or unloved depending on the degree to which they are held, hugged, fed or cuddled. In early infancy, the formation of children’s self-concept is influenced to a large degree by non-verbal communication. In later life, when children develop language skills, they start to translate those general impressions into words and phrases, in addition to incorporating what others say about them.

Children’s self-concept is further developed when they commence school. At this stage children become aware of whether they are liked by others and are included in activities or, because they are unpopular, are often isolated. Children also become aware of their abilities and inabilities in terms of feedback from the teacher and classmates.

Two psychological processes are concerned with the analysis of social feedback, namely self-evaluation and self-worth. For each individual, the real-self and the ideal-self are at variance as the ideal-self encompasses what we would like to become. This disparity is important, however, because without some degree of aspiration children and adults can become poorly adjusted. It is normal, and in fact commendable, for an individual to be continually striving. However, the narrower the gap between the real-self and the ideal-self the more confident the individual will become, and the greater will be his/her capacity to achieve a high level of self-esteem. Conversely, when there is a large disparity between the real-self and ideal-self the individual is more likely to have a low level of self-esteem. The traits of high and low self-esteem are set out below.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH AND LOW SELF-ESTEEM**

Pupils with high self-esteem behave distinctly differently from those individuals who have low self-esteem. It is possible to highlight those distinct
behaviours by firstly identifying behaviours that are associated with pupils of high self-esteem and secondly those which are associated with pupils of low self-esteem.  

Pupils with high self-esteem:  
- have a realistic view of themselves and accept themselves for what they are;  
- are able to identify their strengths and accept their limitations;  
- usually find it easy to relate to others;  
- are not afraid of taking risks, in terms of responding to challenges;  
- do not feel under pressure when confronted with new situations or challenges;  
- react positively to praise;  
- acknowledge recognition for their achievements because they feel responsible for the results;  
- can cope with mistakes and failures and view them as opportunities for further learning; and  
- can establish goals for themselves.  

High self-esteem is an essential ingredient for successful living. High self-esteem enables individuals to cope with mistakes, failures, disappointments and success. An individual with high self-esteem can feel good about himself/herself in general, and is able to establish goals while at the same time accepting his/her limitations. Individuals with high self-esteem are more confident, and ambitious and are effective in using direct clear communication with others. They are not defensive, can cope with criticism, don’t have a need to boast of their achievements and can form healthy relationships with others. Individuals with high self-esteem are also less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol.  

Self-esteem is vital in every aspect of a person's life. A person with high self-esteem has at his/her disposal the prime ingredient for success in school, work, home or in relationships with others. An individual with high self-esteem is likely to be enthusiastic in dealing with new situations and challenges and will be confident about his/her ability to be successful.
Students with low self-esteem can be easily recognised in a classroom setting. They usually adopt defensive mechanisms in order to prevent others knowing how lacking in confidence or how incompetent they feel. Such behaviours may include:

* bullying or threatening others;
* daydreaming;
* extreme shyness or withdrawal;
* unwillingness to take responsibility for their own actions;
* humiliating, teasing or making disparaging remarks about others;
* lying, copying or cheating;
* putting the blame on others when things don’t go right;
* challenging, rebelling or retaliating;
* boasting;
* demanding attention;
* being overly concerned with regard to what others think;
* a lack of independence and individuality; and
* participation in forms of escapism such as truancy, alcohol or drug dependency.¹⁸

Individuals with low self-esteem are products of environments where there is a lack of encouragement and love, where the uniqueness of the individual is not appreciated, where criticism, ridicule and sarcasm abound, where love and acceptance are given on a conditional basis and where there is a lack of recognition, encouragement and praise for achievements. It is not surprising therefore that such individuals adopt a defensive front, engage in boasting, have difficulty in forming and maintaining healthy relationships, feel unlovable and incapable and constantly fear failure.¹⁹ Such individuals, because they possess low self-esteem, will often not progress in school because they are so afraid of failing that they will sometimes not even bother to try rather than risk failure. It is essential that such pupils be given special interest and focus, by providing them with positive feedback, support, real opportunities to experience success, and the knowledge that somebody is concerned about them and cares about them. It has been shown that where conditions are established to foster self-esteem that children with low self-esteem can be transformed into highly motivated students with high self-esteem.²⁰
If the individual who has low self-esteem is an extrovert, then s/he is more inclined to fight back at the origin of the frustration. This child may appear arrogant and boastful on the surface and will give an impression of anything but low self-esteem. At an extreme level this would reflect the classical "inferiority complex" as defined by Jung. If however, the individual may be described as possessing an introverted temperament the individual will more probably withdraw and demonstrate a shy timid behaviour which is also a manifestation of low self-esteem. In both of the situations outlined above the individual is steering clear of the feeling of failure.  

Individuals with low self-esteem who are dissatisfied with themselves, have contempt for themselves even to the extent of feeling a sense of self-rejection. Such persons find it difficult to attempt something in which they might not succeed. They may be unwilling to accept criticism, to ask for help in solving problems or be ill-disposed to being open with others. Individuals with high self-esteem on the other hand, have confidence in themselves. While these individuals may not regard themselves as the ultimate in perfection, on the other hand, they set realistic goals, recognise their limitations and are content and happy with their achievements. This will result in an individual being capable of deciding an overall interpretation of his/her self-worth, which can allow the person to have feelings of worth or unworthiness in certain situations.

**GLOBAL SELF-ESTEEM**

"Global Self Esteem" is an individual’s feeling of overall self-esteem which should be relatively stable over a period of time. For example, a person may feel inadequate with regard to science or chess. Yet these activities do not have to affect an individual’s overall feeling of self-esteem if these situations are not significant or are not a priority. If we cannot avoid certain activities which make us feel inadequate then our overall level of self-esteem may ultimately be reduced. In addition, an individual who continues to fail in certain areas which are considered by significant others as important, may also experience a reduction in global self-esteem. Adults can avoid many circumstances and activities where they feel inadequate. A child, however, is not in a position to escape school subjects which suggests why failure at school can so easily affect a child’s overall level of
self-esteem. For example if a teacher/parent considers that success in mathematics is vital in order to succeed in this world, then a child who is weak at mathematics, may deem himself/herself a total failure, thus affecting his/her overall self-esteem.

It is important that home and school therefore are conscious of promoting overall self-esteem and the harmonious development of the child. The next chapter will examine the influence of the home in this regard.
CHAPTER 3

PARENTS AND SELF-ESTEEM

The family is the single most influential basis for the development of self-esteem. Until the child commences school, the family remains the most important learning ground for the child. This later extends to peers, teachers and other non-family members of significance. Children have their first experience of self-esteem enhancement or reduction as early as six weeks with reference to how individuals respond to their physical and emotional needs. Parents act as mirrors for their children from the perspective that children learn about themselves from parents. As children grow older, significant others such as teachers or friends will act as mirrors to tell them who they are. However, the child "will return to the reflection in the mirror that his/her parents hold for his/her sense of goodness, importance, and basic worth".

As children go through the various stages of development, their level of self-esteem is changed with regard to how the significant adults in their lives fulfil their needs and the extent to which they are successful in getting through each developmental stage. Research conducted by Coopersmith which examined the home conditions of 1,730 families to ascertain which aspects of parental behaviour significantly changed the child's level of self-esteem, pinpointed three basic conditions which are instrumental to developing high self-esteem in the home environment:

1. **Unconditional love and affection**

   Children grow and develop if they are regarded by parents and significant others as being lovable and capable. It is important, however, that children experience unconditional love and affection, where they are loved for what they are rather than what they do. Within the family, every interaction of a verbal or non-verbal nature communicates a message to the child about his/her lovability or capability. Such a message informs the child about his/her worth.
Children are convinced that their parents are always right and they rely on them for their self-image.

2. **Well defined limits consistently enforced**
Children will not develop high self-esteem if they live in a home with no rules and restrictions or, alternatively, too many rules and restrictions. Children will grow and develop if they are continually encouraged to comply with whatever regulations or limits are drawn up. In families where there are no limits laid down due to either over-protection or neglect, the net result will be a lack of motivation and feelings of indifference and defencelessness.

3. **A clear amount of respect shown to children**
It is essential that children feel that they are valuable human beings who have a contribution to make to the home environment. It is important that adults view them as having a role in the family rather than as "individuals who should be seen and not heard".

By the time a child is ready to begin school the foundation of a child's self-esteem has already been put in place and those children with either high or low self-esteem can be easily pinpointed.

Parents, due to the centrality of their roles, have an influence on the physical, psychological and social development of each individual family member. Because parents are the mirrors from which children form their first images of self it is reasonable to expect that parents' own level of self-esteem will influence their children's level of self-esteem. It has been claimed that parents with middle to low self-esteem will influence comparable levels of self-esteem in their children and perpetuate such levels in each other. On the other hand, parents with high self-esteem have an extensive acceptance of self and others.

The appropriate functioning of all human systems is largely determined by the self-esteem of the individuals within the particular system. It is generally accepted that the family is the most important of all human systems. Not only can family relationships have an effect on the self-esteem of individual members but it has been suggested that they also affect health matters. Evidence from psychology and psychiatry appears to
suggest that psychotic and neurotic difficulties, in addition to family and marital problems, are linked to an individual’s personal defencelessness and feelings of inferiority or superiority. Medical evidence also demonstrates a strong connection between physical health, longevity and high self-esteem.⁶

The research appears to suggest that the more autonomous, independent, stable and personally fulfilled a person is, the more likely they are be successful in attaining and maintaining effective family relationships. Parental acceptance or non-acceptance in childhood is a big factor in this regard.

PARENTAL ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE
For most adults any condemning, judging voices which they hear may have been with them since childhood. Due to parental influence individuals may see themselves as competent or incompetent, stupid or intelligent, effective or helpless, worthless or lovable. The need for parental approval is so strong that the urge for parental acceptance may continue even after parents have died.⁷

Parental acceptance has a positive influence on a child’s self-esteem. A study by Rosenberg⁸ focused on:

(i) Parent–child communication at meal-times;
(ii) Parents’ cognisance of the child’s school friends; and
(iii) Parents’ responses to the child’s academic performance.

(i) The study found that meal-times give children important feedback with regard to their worth because, for many children, this is a constant point of contact, and maybe even a significant proportion of the parent-child contact in the day.
(ii) Parental interest in a child’s friends was not strongly linked to positive self-esteem.
(iii) Parental reaction to a child’s academic performance was investigated with reference to the parents’ reactions to the child’s report card from school.
Three reactions referred to were:

*Punitive:* Where the parent condemned or disapproved of the child’s performance.

*Indifferent:* Where the parent remained completely unresponsive to the report card.

*Supportive:* When the parent openly communicated to the child about his/her performance—praised the child for successful results, endeavoured to point out reasons for poor performance and extended encouragement to the child.

The study found that low self-esteem was closely linked to an indifferent reaction from parents.

Parents can enhance a child’s self-esteem by firstly noticing examples of the child’s ability including talents, interests and skills and by bringing them to the child’s attention. Secondly, they can look for opportunities to praise children frequently for their abilities and talents and finally parents can give them numerous opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. If a parent starts to see a child in a positive light then the child will commence to see him/herself in that light also. If the child senses that parents approve of his/her actions or activities then the child’s level of self-esteem will be enhanced.

The structure of the family is such that there is an unequal distribution of power within a family between parents and children. Unlike other groups, equal partnership is non-existent. There is a realm of dependency in a family where children are totally dependant on adults initially and then to a lesser degree, until late adolescence. Parents have a unique sense of power and authority over their children and the way in which they utilise this power will determine the resultant self-esteem levels of their children. There are many forms of family organisation which in turn may influence the self-esteem of children. Children who come from democratic families are likely to have a high level of self-esteem. On the other hand, children who come from autocratic families or from families where there are poorly defined limits and evidence of strict methods of control will most likely have a low level of self-esteem.
Research indicates the desirability of parents displaying a style of parenting conducive to the development of a child's self-esteem. In this study three different styles of parenting were outlined and the resultant effect of each of them on children was examined. They are authoritarian, authoritative and laissez-faire parenting styles.

(a) **Authoritarian Parents**

Authoritarian parents are adamant that the child should respond to their rules and regulations without question. This category of parent is also punitive and restrictive in disciplinary methods. They expect hard work and effort and put restrictions and controls on the child. Children who find themselves in this type of setting are fearful of any new initiative and are uncomfortable and anxious when interacting with others.

(b) **Authoritative Parents**

Authoritative parents on the other hand, encourage independence even though they do not disregard limits and demands. In this context, rules and regulations are discussed with the child and explained in a warm and encouraging atmosphere. This category of parenting is equated with a child being socially proficient, able to initiate new projects and willing to take on responsibility.

(c) **Laissez-faire Parents**

Laissez-faire parents on the other hand, do not put demands or limits on the child. They allow children almost total freedom to manage their own behaviour. These children lack social expertise, self control and leadership skills.

From the perspective, therefore, of enhancing the child's self-esteem this research suggests that an authoritative style of parenting is the most desirable. Another study found that an authoritative style of parenting was related significantly to self-esteem while an authoritarian style of parenting was inversely correlated with self-esteem.

Parents need to be conscious of the influence which they have over children. While adults have the option of remaining separate from the messages and communication of others, viewing them as manifestations of
the self-esteem of the sender, most children don't have this choice. In addition, children are more sensitive to the non-verbal and verbal language of parents and others. Parents should be aware of the importance of their verbal messages being consistent with their non-verbal ones, because otherwise the child will be more likely to choose the non-verbal message as the correct one.

The style of parenting including the disciplinary methods used by parents and the communication patterns of parents will ultimately determine whether or not the child's behaviour will become inner or outer focused. In a democratic family, where there is encouragement and direct, open and honest communication, the child will become a more mature and self-motivated individual and will willingly carry out tasks, irrespective of whether the parent is there or not. An autocratic family on the other hand will place more emphasis on external control by utilising fear and punishment in order to force the child to carry out certain tasks. The child in such a situation becomes focused on finding ways to beat the system. The style of parenting may also be reflected in the use of language in the home environment.

THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN PROMOTING SELF-ESTEEM
A critical factor in the development of the child's level of self-esteem is the nature of the language used by parents. The endless interactions parents have each day with children provide children with feedback in relation to who they are. Like a carpenter's tools on a block of timber, parents' words, tone of voice and actions shape a child's sense of self. It is essential, therefore, that parents be encouraged to offer children feedback in the language of self-esteem. Such feedback encompasses three elements:

1. A description of the behaviour.
2. Parents' reaction to the behaviour.
3. Acknowledgement of feeling.

A description of the behaviour and acknowledgement of the child's feelings is important in being able to describe the behaviour without judging the child. It is important to differentiate between the child's worth and his/her behaviour. In other words, a child is not a good child because s/he washes the dishes, or a bad child because s/he spills orange juice on
the floor. The child is good because s/he is special to the parent who loves and cares about him/her. By describing behaviour children get an accurate picture of how their actions affect others, rather than confusing their behaviour with their basic worth as individuals. The parents’ reaction to the behaviour communicates their response to the child, be that anger, frustration, delight or appreciation. Children, therefore, are more willing to work towards expectations and steer clear of conflict when they are informed as to why individuals react in the way in which they do. In acknowledging the child’s feelings the language of self-esteem confirms the experience of the child. In other words, the child considers that s/he is understood even when being corrected. The next step involves a clear statement of what is expected from the child. The following example outlines how the language of self-esteem can be used to correct children. “I notice books and toys all over the kitchen floor (description of behaviour). When the kitchen is tidy we will have dinner (reason for behavioural change). I know you are tired and hungry at the moment (acknowledgement of feeling). I want the toys put away and the books placed neatly on the shelves” (statement of expectation).  

The steps outlined above avoid destructive language styles designed to undermine self-esteem. Instead, children are given an appropriate procedure in direct clear communication, a process which they will internalise and will use in their interaction with others. Praise and encouragement shape behaviour and promote learning. When children are praised, they learn that they are special and can take pride in their achievements and become aware of their talents and abilities. If parents share their feelings with their children they then become understandable rather than unpredictable.

If parents focus on ways of actually helping children to behave appropriately, then their self-esteem will grow and develop. For instance, it is essential that parents’ expectations be plausible and applicable for the child’s age and ability. For example, it is not realistic to expect a four year old to work on a specific task while sitting on the same chair for a two hour period. Nor would it be reasonable to expect a three year old to wash and dry dishes without incurring any breakage. It is also advisable to be clear about expectations. Children will be more likely to comply with the regulation “I want you to tidy away the things in your bedroom neatly”, if
they clearly comprehend what is involved, i.e. putting their things including clothes, toys, books, in their proper places, rather than shoving them under the bed. It is important to place emphasis on the positive continually. In such a context it will be easier to refer to the good as well as the bad. If a child feels successful, even to some extent, then it will be easier to work harder to correct what needs perfecting. For example, at school the teacher might say “the approach you took to doing your sums was correct, but you need to take more care in the computation of your answers”. The provision of choices and rewards is also effective. For example, “when you finish your homework you can spend an hour watching television or an hour reading”. Rewards are important because they provide children with the incentive to keep striving, or to encourage a child to change a habit.

This area of choices and rewards is important from the perspective of both parents and teachers and merits further study, separate from this report.

The use of the language of self-esteem is essential in correcting children. Children are more likely to respond favourably when they are given reasons for the correction. When children are corrected in the language of self-esteem they have the option and freedom to change their behaviour without feeling guilty about being a bad or unacceptable child. Correction and discipline are not contrary to the promotion of self-esteem in children.¹⁴

The parent-child relationship is a critical factor in the child’s social development and children who have a good relationship with parents are inclined to show better social adjustment and self-esteem development.

FAMILY–SCHOOL RELATIONS
One of the most important tasks of parenthood is, perhaps, assisting children to grow and develop with a strong sense of self-esteem because the child with a good sense of self-esteem is more likely to enjoy success and fulfilment as an adult. It has been suggested that “self-esteem is the armour that protects kids from the dragons of life: drugs, alcohol, unhealthy relationships and delinquency”.¹⁵
It is accepted that when family and learning environments are supportive of learning and in harmony with each other, children's learning outcomes will be enhanced. It has been shown that the family is a powerful influence on children's learning and when the home and school have opposing views to life and learning, the children may be affected. On the other hand, when home and school have similar emphasis on learning and motivation, children will stand a better chance of doing well.

A study\(^7\) has shown that parent-child relationship tend to have a closer linkage to children's general self-concept whereas the school-child relationship appears to have a closer correlation with academic achievements. The family may be regarded as being mainly responsible for the social and emotional development of children. However, extrinsic factors for example economic and social conditions may impact on the family's ability to provide optimum growth and development of children.

Parents and teachers should be partners in assisting a child to feel good and to be successful in school. For example, if there is a problem at home which may affect a child's performance at school the teacher should be told. Parents should also have a clear idea about what teachers actually expect from their child in terms of effort and performance. The child who is performing below standard in school faces a continual attack on his/her self-esteem, and in many cases if the problem is investigated and addressed, a solution can be formulated by parents and teachers working together for the common benefit of the child.
CHAPTER 4

THE TEACHER AND SELF-ESTEEM

When children commence school they bring with them the influence of relationships with significant adults, in particular relationships with parents. These relationships are the foundation on which children build self-esteem. The experience children have at school can, therefore, serve to enhance or diminish the self-image that they bring to school. It is known that children who manifest learning difficulties in school frequently have low levels of self-esteem and that it is necessary, therefore, to focus on the enhancement of self-esteem before significant learning can take place. It is also known that levels of self-esteem held by teachers can influence the development of high self-esteem in children. Teachers who observe children with low self-esteem can, in conjunction with parents and others, work to enhance their levels of self-esteem.

TEACHER SELF-ESTEEM

School effectiveness is largely determined by the teachers in a particular school. Even in this era of technological progress, computers, televisions and videos have not replaced the teacher. The role of the teacher in the education process of children is central and largely determines the experience that children have in school, which in turn influences the child’s self-concept and development.

Teachers who have a high level of self-esteem manifest themselves in the classroom as confident, relaxed and have a respectful attitude towards students. The ethos engendered by such a person who projects trust and belief in the child’s capacity and who has a warm supportive presence which enhances the child’s view of him/herself as someone of worth, results in an enhancement of the student’s performance. Teachers who have a high level of self-esteem are more likely to be flexible and exploratory in their approach to teaching.
Research has shown that teachers' own self concept has an influence on their own and others' behaviour, including that of their pupils. A teacher's level of self-esteem will influence his/her style of teaching and ability to develop good pupil-teacher relationships. Teachers' levels of self-esteem will also have an influence on their perception and expectations of themselves as teachers and of their pupils as learners.¹

The teacher is in a powerful position to be able to "influence a student's self-esteem not only through the use of systematic activities but also through the establishment of particular caring relationships with students and there is clear evidence that relationships between teacher and students can be either conducive to the enhancement of self-esteem or conducive towards reducing self-esteem".² This influence is powerful and occurs whether or not the teacher in the class is aware of it or not. Teachers who are more aware of the hidden curriculum in the classroom and its impact on self-esteem are better equipped to enhance the child's self-esteem than those who are unaware or who ignore such dynamics.

It appears, therefore, that teachers' attitudes towards themselves are powerful determinants of whether self-esteem will be enhanced or not. Attitudes, motives and perceptions influence the way teachers act and are transmitted to pupils through actions, thereby influencing their attitudinal development. Messages are transmitted to pupils by verbal and non-verbal means. Often the real meanings of verbal messages do not really lie in the verbal content of the message. The real message may be in the tone, inflection, facial expression or demeanour of the speaker and the non-verbal, visual or auditory cues that deliver the message.

Teachers with healthy levels of self-esteem who are confident and relaxed about their role as teachers, communicate positive messages both verbally and non-verbally to their students. Such verbal and non-verbal cues include tone of voice, body posture, body orientation, speed of speech, pauses in speech, gestures and facial expressions, the manner in which they walk around the classroom, and the way in which teachers scan the classroom.

Teacher interactions with pupils may be encouraging, praising, valuing or alternatively they may be cajoling, blaming, punishing and generally anxiety producing. It is generally believed that there is a positive and a
negative way of saying the same thing and it has been shown that whichever is used has either a constructive or a detrimental effect on a pupil’s self-esteem.

ENHANCING LEVELS OF SELF-ESTEEM IN CHILDREN

Many exercises can be used by teachers in the classroom in order to enhance children’s levels of self-esteem. However, the successful aspect of any self-esteem enhancing exercise is to have due regard for the ethos in which it occurs. Three conditions are essential in order to create an ethos/climate where learning conducive to the enhancement of self-esteem can take place. They are empathy, acceptance and genuineness.

(i) Empathy

Empathy, when expressed verbally, gives students reassurance that they are understood and accepted for what they are. Empathy also implies being able to appreciate what it feels like to be another person. One possible way of doing this is perhaps trying to come to terms with the feelings behind a verbal message. If pupils feel that the teacher understands them and that the teacher “is on their wavelength”, then it is more probable that the pupil will trust or be influenced by that teacher. A correlation was found between the level of empathy in a student and the level of academic attainment. Evidence suggests that students tend to perform better if they like the teacher and if they feel the teacher understands them.

(ii) Acceptance

Acceptance means liking and demonstrating concerns for the students as they are, with their strengths and weaknesses, capacities and limitations. For instance, if a child misbehaves, it is important that the child is still accepted even though the behaviour requires reprimand. Acceptance can be shown by demonstrating concerns for the child’s welfare, by maintaining interest in the child, by being involved in the child’s development, by recognising and appreciating what the child can do and by offering support for the child in times of difficulty.

The development of a child’s self-concept is encouraged when the child is accepted by the teacher as a significant other. This acceptance
leads to students being less likely to deny their strengths and be more likely to achieve their potential. In addition, acceptance conveys the message to children that they will not be treated less favourably than other children and that they are not compared to others but are accepted as individuals. If parents and teachers expect children to succeed in line with their abilities and accept their performance in those terms, then students will be less likely to adopt the coping strategies of avoidance or compensation. It is vital therefore that home–school links are effective and that there is two-way communication between parents and teachers, in terms of supporting the child to attain realistic goals comparable with his/her abilities.

(iii) Genuineness

Genuineness means being able to respond to a person in need, naturally and spontaneously as one might respond to a good friend, rather than in terms of an individual’s professional stereotype or status. The behavioural characteristics of a genuine person have been outlined as follows:

(1) their verbal and non-verbal behaviours are congruent with each other;
(2) they are willing to be open about themselves;
(3) they do not refer to their status/role;
(4) they are consistent in their behaviour whether counselling a pupil or not;
(5) if challenged, they can cope with the challenge and explain their viewpoint without utilising their authority to put the students in their place.

Teachers who are aware of the importance of enhancing self-esteem give pupils realistic self-concepts rather than inaccurate ones. The teacher–pupil relationship will be one where empathy, acceptance and genuineness exist and where children “will accept blame and criticism without adversely affecting self-esteem”. Even though there may be many aspects of the
While from the perspective of self-esteem enhancement it is important that the teacher should strive to get to know the pupils in his/her class on a personal level, this does not mean imposing on children's right to privacy. Even where a teacher might have reason to suspect that the child's home life is far from satisfactory, the experienced teacher will refrain from directly questioning the child. In situations like this, teachers will endeavour to keep the channels of communication open by setting up and maintaining a relationship of trust, where the characteristics of acceptance, empathy and genuineness are truly present.

Teachers also can have a major impact on the self-esteem of children without even being aware of it on many occasions. This is particularly the case in relation to children who come from families where there is conflict or who have experienced an absence of feedback or a lack of positive attention. Most teachers can sense those children who require reassurance and who on many occasions go to great trouble to get the teacher's attention. If such children discover that they cannot achieve this through positive means they may resort to misbehaviour to avoid being ignored. Therefore, teachers should strive towards conveying a sense of caring to every student and remember that the children to whom it is often most difficult to relate may require this attention most. Ongoing positive feedback is a tool deployed by the experienced teacher to achieve this type of interaction which enhances self-esteem.

TEACHER FEEDBACK AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM
Positive and negative feedback in the form of verbal or non-verbal communication is an integral part of teaching. Teacher feedback, an integral part of the teaching/learning process, provides reinforcement for behaviour which has an influence on self-concept and on the expectations an individual has for him/herself and for others.

The circular process of self-concept, behaviour and feedback can be
illustrated by the following diagram:

This process is explained as follows:

A child who has a good perception of him/herself will perform at a reasonably adequate level and the teacher will in turn perceive the child favourably. The teacher’s favourable expectations and perceptions fuel the pupil’s self-concept. The progress of the child continues and so the cycle is ongoing. On the other hand, a child who has a perception of him/herself as a failure comes to school with a poor view of him/herself and performs in accordance with this opinion. The teacher is likely to view the child unfavourably and this is picked up by the pupil, who in turn is pushed further into a cycle of failure and low self-esteem.13

Personal interest and feedback can increase student confidence and self-esteem. In a study on this topic14 it was shown that teachers can influence
achievement by increasing positive feedback. The study examined three different methods of marking three groups of students. The first group of students were given back their papers with a mark and a comment. The second group were given back their papers with just a standard stereotyped comment. Students in the third group received a personal comment on every paper outlining what teachers thought might encourage that particular student. When the next set of tests was administered, groups two and three out-performed group one.

On the other hand, a student who has failed repeatedly at a particular task and who interprets that failure as a consequence of lack of ability, will experience negative effects and a decrease in self-esteem and will not expect to perform well on a similar task in the future. In particular, such a student will perform worse after failure than before on tasks of equal difficulty.\textsuperscript{15}

This was confirmed by a study\textsuperscript{16} which investigated whether or not students could be influenced to feel good/bad about themselves by the words and actions used by a teacher. The teaching methods in two junior classes were compared and contrasted. Teacher A’s emphasis was on getting to know each child on an individual basis. The teacher ensured that the comments made were designed in order that the pupils would view themselves more positively while helping them to be more realistic about their ability. The emphasis was placed on pinpointing the student’s specific strengths and weaknesses as the teacher remarked on the students’ value as a whole person. Teacher B, who was viewed as an effective teacher, used traditional methods of teaching where there was an emphasis on corrections, on the serious consequences of failure and on passing examinations. The results showed that pupils of Teacher A demonstrated slightly higher average improvement than the students of Teacher B in standardised reading and number tests. Teacher A’s students were well adjusted, had a more accurate self image of themselves and were more accepting of themselves, while teacher B’s students showed signs of insecurity.

An experienced teacher with realistic expectations of students will, in turn, facilitate those students in making realistic judgements of their own level of ability.
TEACHER EXPECTATIONS AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM
This aspect of the teacher/student relationship has received a good deal of recognition and is more commonly referred to as 'The Expectancy Effect'. This phenomenon highlights the fact that students tend to behave in line with the teachers’ belief in their worth. Hargreaves indicated that teachers usually have an ideal pupil model and those pupils in their class who do not conform to this ideal model are evaluated unfavourably and are not expected to perform well. A classic study by Rosenthal and Jacobson showed that IQ gains of significance were made by children who were taught by teachers who held a high expectation of their performance on the basis of fictitious information. Later studies substantiate these findings.

In a study, Brophy and Good showed that teachers obtained information from a child’s previous teacher with regard to work performance and behaviour and then worked on the assumptions that the child would conform to this standard. In other words, they related to the child as if to expect this behaviour or performance.

The influence of teachers’ expectations on the performance of students is a major area of study, which is not possible to examine in detail in this report.

TEACHING STYLE AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING SELF-ESTEEM
Teaching style has an influence on classroom climate which inevitably affects student achievement. It has been shown that quality of work, pride in the finished product and even a person’s willingness to participate in tasks, increase when individuals have confidence in a leader.

Teachers influence pupils intellectually, personally and emotionally and how they teach and how they deal with students in the classroom, will have life-long effects. A blend of teaching strategies which takes into account cognitive and affective growth, is the way forward for the child’s optimum development because, according to the research, ‘students’ cognitive growth will not flourish fully in classrooms where there is not an interweaving of teaching strategies which address both students’ cognitive
Effective teaching strategies which promote the enhancement of self-esteem in the classroom include: motivation, the use of appropriate rules and choices, realistic goal setting, task analysis and evaluation. These strategies are set out below.

(i) Motivation
Motivation is an important factor in the development of self-esteem. Children’s motivation for learning is inevitably influenced by numerous factors such as home environment, previous learning experience, the classroom and school environment, as well as factors specific to the students themselves. Because all children are not enthusiastic about learning all of the time it is an integral part of the teacher’s role to try to motivate children.

Pupil motivation is influenced by factors referred to earlier such as:
- positive feedback;
- the establishment of a caring pupil teacher relationship (where the factors of acceptance, genuineness and empathy are evident);
- teachers verbal and non-verbal communication;
- pupils being made feel that they are responsible for their own achievement;
- the setting of realistic goals; and
- realistic evaluation.

Teachers hold the balance of power in relation to student motivation in the classroom. They have the power to enhance students’ self-esteem thus increasing students’ motivation and consequently the pupils’ willingness to learn. Pupils, first of all, need to be aware that they are supported by the teacher in the tasks they are trying to fulfil or attain but that they are not smothered by the teacher’s advice and assistance on the other hand. This will mean that pupils will be more likely to regard themselves as responsible for their own success. For example, a parent or teacher may think that they are doing a favour for a child who is having difficulty working out a particular mathematical problem by sitting down beside the child and solving the problem rather than giving some advice and permitting the child to try again to solve the problem on his/her own initiative.
(ii) Rules and Choices

It is accepted that rules are an integral part of a school's functioning. It is argued also that the provision of appropriate choices for children should be interlinked with the development of respect towards rules, with the acceptance of responsibility and the consequent enhancement of self-esteem. Rules identify what the school desires pupils to refrain from, but, in addition, rules also set out the particular expectations the teacher holds for pupils. Research has shown "that when there is a provision of adequate choice and decision making within a framework of acceptable rules, positive self-attitudes and achievement in school is promoted".25

To increase the possibility that a child will actually follow the rules as guidelines, teachers formulate rules on a realistic basis and devise relatively small numbers of rules. By establishing a fairly limited number of rules and regulations the likelihood is greater that the rules will be maintained without a constant battle to continually reinforce them. The establishment of a number of rules which function as guidelines to pupils actually aids the enhancement of a positive self-concept and high self-esteem by giving pupils the standards against which behaviour and success will be assessed.26

Pupils need a certain freedom of choice with regard to how they learn, e.g. having all seven year old pupils in a class on the same page every single day may not always enhance the level of self-esteem of the majority of pupils in that class. Pupils require additional responsibility in relation to setting their own performance standards, levels of aspiration and the speed at which they will learn. Within such a system pupils take responsibility for their own progress and aspirations which should be always ahead of present achievements. If pupils can take responsibility for their pace of learning then they will be in a position to control the level of success and failure they experience. In this particular system, a pupil can hope to become "disposed to work for successes rather than compelled to avoid disappointment".27 These matters can be explained at parent-teacher meetings, so that parents can support the teacher's goal, to enhance the self-confidence of pupils in line with their abilities.
For this to happen, it is essential that effort is rewarded. This requires moving away from a system where excellence and success are measured by comparing one pupil with another in terms of their achievement, to a system where the focus is on the pupils themselves comparing themselves at their best or worst. Effort is then rewarded on the basis of the realistic goals set by the individual.

(iii) Goal Setting
Pupils need to be shown how to set realistic goals for themselves. Research on goal setting indicates that pupils with negative self-concepts set their goals either unrealistically too high or too low. This implies that, whatever the outcome, it can always be interpreted as failure. Whereas the high goal can never be reached, the low goal is so low that everyone attains it—"even me". It has been shown that pupils who have a positive self-concept attribute failure to attain a high goal to external factors such as bad luck or to blame others rather than blaming themselves.

The task of teachers and parents, therefore, is to assist pupils to establish realistic goals for each child which require some effort but are still within the ability of the child to achieve. An individual goal must be established to motivate the child which is realistic in comparison to past performances, in order that success can be reinforced, which in turn if attained raises self-esteem and makes it more probable that the child will begin to view him/herself more as a success and less as a failure. For example, if a child gets only 5 sums out of 20 right, the target set by the teacher for that child will be to try to get 6 correct the following day. In this way if the child gets 6 or more correct, it will be seen as a personal success. When such a goal is established by the teacher, then the pupil is more committed to it.

A research experiment demonstrated the advisability of realistic goal setting. Instead of giving spellings to students on a random basis as is usually the case, the experimenters gave each student a choice of words to spell which were either easy, moderately difficult or difficult, with higher points awarded for the more difficult spellings and no points awarded for incorrect spellings. Pupils quickly learned
that a realistic assessment of one's own skill is the one which yields the greatest pay off and which is, incidentally, the most challenging.29

Realistic goal setting also enhances the correct attributions in relation to the causes of success and failure. When a child concentrates on a particular task within his/her reach, then the degree of effort which the individual devotes to the task will become the most important determinant of success or failure. In such circumstances, if the student does not attain the goal the blame will more likely be attributed to insufficient effort due to the fact that the particular task was within the child’s ability. Success on the other hand will be attributed to skillful effort.30

(iv) Task Analysis
Another teaching strategy, related to realistic goal setting, is task analysis. The advantages in being able to make a difficult task easier are that it enhances the students’ sense of being responsible for their own successes. In addition, it prompts the student to focus on the main obstacles to learning and enables the students to increase the opportunities for success without necessarily lowering aspirations. It is clear, therefore, that realistic goal setting combined with task analysis strengthens the link between effort and outcome and assists in preventing a sense of learned helplessness. If the goals students set for themselves are unrealistic, then those students’ evaluations of themselves are also going to be unrealistic. There is a tendency for students with low self-esteem to judge themselves in relation to unattainable goals of perfection.31

(v) Self-Esteem and Evaluation
Many children require help from teachers in order to evaluate themselves realistically. A child scoring 95 out of 100 may regard this as less than perfect and hence view him/herself as a failure. Many children in a classroom never attain an A grade. If, however, an individual’s performance indicates an improvement on a daily or weekly basis, then that particular child, if informed about this improvement, will be motivated to continue to achieve and will have acquired positive feelings about him/herself. If evaluation is linked to a comparison with past performance, then the obsession with
perfection may diminish. With some thought and foresight it is always possible to link failure with hope. In the case, therefore, where a child gets 0/20 in spellings it may be pointed out that parts of the words were actually spelt correctly. Where a child only gets three sums correct out of 30, s/he can be shown that in fact the procedure adopted was correct and that his/her calculations were carelessly done. It is essential for the enhancement of the child’s self-esteem that every improvement, no matter how small, be praised and that the pupil comes to realise that improvement is the criterion for self-praise and self-encouragement.32

We have already referred to the fact that the level of self-esteem of a particular teacher influences the teacher’s style of teaching and the ethos that is created within a particular classroom.

On a wider scale, the self-esteem of individual staff members will influence the staff relations among staff within a school and the resultant overall ethos of the school. The ethos of a particular school, one will find, is largely a mirror of the types of relationships within the school. Where staff relationships are honest, open and co-operative, that view of the school will filter down to parents and students within the school. Staff relationships are a major contributor to developing a positive ethos in schools.

If a teacher in a school has a self-esteem problem, it not only affects that particular individual but will have knock-on effects on pupils and colleagues. A teacher with low self-esteem may be a compliant quiet teacher who works extremely hard, and never requests anything from colleagues. If, for example, this teacher has discipline problems in the classroom and does not look for help from staff members, then the problem may get worse. It is also possible for a teacher with low self-esteem to display inner turmoil by means of an aggressive domineering manner. Both of these maladaptive behaviours are a disguise for personal insecurity, for individuals who have a low level of self-esteem. It is vital that all staff members be focused towards developing mature relationships in an environment where staff members with self-esteem problems will feel supported and confident to be open about their needs and concerns, in order to acquire the help they need to solve their problem.33
Staff morale is the foundation stone on which a healthy staff environment is built. Humphreys lists the following requirements for the creation of good staff morale:

- High level of interaction among staff.
- Decisions are made by the group.
- Leaders are available and approachable.
- Leaders affirm staff and staff affirm each other.
- Staff affirm leaders.
- Constructive communication of differences, unmet needs and emergency feelings.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND THE SKILL OF ASSERTION

In recent years there has been much research and many training courses have been organised on developing guidelines for behaving assertively. Assertive behaviour aims to satisfy the needs and wants of both parties in a situation (a win/win situation). Assertiveness is based on the belief that an individual has needs, rights and something to contribute as do others. Assertiveness also implies that individuals should defend their own rights without actually violating the rights of others. Individuals who are assertive are able to express their needs, wants, opinions and feelings in direct, honest and appropriate ways.

Non-assertion on the other hand is based on the belief that other people’s needs and wants are more important than one’s own. It can result in the avoidance of conflict to please others and a non-assertive individual does not express his/her needs, wants, opinions and beliefs (a lose/win situation).

Conversely, aggressive behaviour which again is an antithesis to assertiveness is based on the belief that a person’s needs and wants are more important than those of others (a win/lose situation).

Generally the guidelines for behaving assertively require that in any situation individuals should:

- decide what they want;
- state their request clearly and unambiguously;
* ensure that verbal and non-verbal behaviour are congruent;
* not be manipulated or distracted from what they want to say;
* listen;
* try to achieve a win/win situation.

The first step towards establishing healthy staff relations, is putting in place a system of open communication in which teachers will feel secure in expressing their needs and obtaining advice and support from fellow staff members. Communication, in most instances, focuses on needs and when it is open those needs are generally met. It is important that communication is straight-forward and comprehensible, in the form of an "I" statement. Honestly asking for help or expressing one's feelings does not suggest dependence or inferiority or weakness but rather the contrary—"every time you suppress the need for support and help, you miss the chance to grow". In any school there is a wealth of talent, skill, knowledge, support, understanding and advice but regrettably it is not always utilised.
CHAPTER 5

THE PUPIL AND SELF-ESTEEM

This chapter examines the link between academic achievement and the development of self-esteem, whether academic self-concepts are influenced by gender differences, the strategies of avoidance and compensation and if there is a correlation between self-esteem and social problems.

THE CHILD’S LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM

Children with a high level of self-esteem will be able to interact easily with other children. They generally do not find it difficult to make friends because they have an inner confidence within themselves. Children in this category are not afraid of the unknown or the unfamiliar in terms of learning and are always open to new learning and new challenges. Children with a high level of self-esteem are not afraid of asking questions which may reveal their temporary ignorance, nor are they afraid of making mistakes because they regard mistakes as opportunities for further learning. In their willingness to continually improve and enhance their own level of knowledge they are not afraid to volunteer for activities.

On the other hand, children with a low level of self-esteem are not likely to partake freely in any new activity until they feel confident of their ability to succeed. They will want, first of all, to watch others embark on, or undertake an activity successfully before they will have the courage and confidence within themselves to try. Children with low self-esteem will find it difficult to ask questions, due to their lack of confidence. They are reluctant to have the spotlight turned on them, in case others might think that their questions are stupid. Children with low self-esteem are overly concerned about what others may think about them. They also find it difficult to interact freely with others due to their underlying feelings of low self-worth.
Self-esteem will not just determine the child’s educational progress but also her/his social, emotional, personal and intellectual development. The development of the child’s self-esteem is primarily in the hands of parents in terms of the degree of love shown in the family and the level of self-esteem of each parent. However, the child’s self-esteem is also influenced by the way that other significant adults relate to them.

(i) Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement

Numerous studies have been conducted into the relationship between academic performance and self-concept. They do not, however, appear to suggest a significant correlation between general self-concept and academic achievement.

It can be demonstrated that children’s self-concept predicts the child’s ability to read in first grade at least as effectively as intelligence measures and that self-concept predicts and has an influence on school achievement from the primary level through to third level. Research has tried to determine which comes first—academic success or self-esteem—and has deduced that in the majority of studies self-esteem is the cause rather than the effect. It is also stated that there is an optimum level of self-esteem which students should possess or else they are unlikely to be motivated to try, or inclined to succeed. Many studies over the past 75 years have shown a positive association between self-esteem variables and academic achievement. In addition, studies suggest that as the level of self-esteem increases so too do achievement scores.

Self-concept, however, represents a multiplicity of attitudes towards the self. It is for this reason that many researchers isolate self-concept of ability and compare it to academic achievement. For example, in one research study an examination of the relationship between academic achievement and self-concept revealed that:

* there was a correlation between the image the students felt significant others held of them and self-concept of ability;
* self-concept of ability operated independently of IQ in predicting achievement at school;
* self-concept of ability was a more accurate predictor of success at school than overall self-concept;
• while students who stated that they had a low self-concept of ability seldom performed at above average levels, those students who reported a high concept of ability did not achieve at comparable levels.

It seems, therefore, that while self-concept of academic ability is an essential aspect of academic performance it is not the only factor in determining academic success. The most significant link between self-esteem and attainment takes place at the lower end of the scale. In other words, failure is more predictably linked with low self-esteem than high achievement is with high self-esteem. While it is reasonable to expect that the relationship between self-concept and academic achievement is reciprocal it is not unidirectional.

In the research studies there is a lack of agreement with regard to sex-differences in general self-concept and self-concept of ability and achievement interactions. An examination of gender differences in the scholastic self-concepts of Irish pupils found that there were considerable differences between the way boys and girls rate themselves and the way in which they perceive themselves as learners. There were only three characteristics where the ratings of boys and girls did not differ significantly. On the whole boys compared to girls were inclined to rate themselves more favourably. This study showed that the self-concepts of boys over a range of educational variables were more positive than those of girls.

(ii) Avoidance and Compensation

"Success is not uniformly good, as has long been thought, nor is failure always bad". With regard to children’s learning, it is interesting to note that success and failure have little or no influence on children’s determination to learn, but “the reaction of parents, teachers and other significant adults to success and failure can have a devastating effect on children’s motivation to learn”.

When the reaction of teachers, parents and significant others to successful endeavours, is positive and negative to failure, then children will be unsure about their capacity to satisfy significant adults in their lives and their ability to carry out whatever is
requested. Many adults do not understand that praising children's academic performances can actually have the same detrimental effect as criticism of mistake and failures. In the first instance, pleasing parents depends on academic achievement or results rather than on effort, and in the second instance, fear of failure is the result of too much criticism. Children who find themselves in such a situation often adopt either of two diametrically opposed coping mechanisms in order to protect themselves from the cruel reality of conditionality which surrounds them. These coping strategies are namely avoidance and compensation. Avoidance implies that without effort there can be no failure and without failure there can be no rejection or humiliation. ¹⁰ Sometimes, students may give an outward impression that they are highly successful when the reality is, however, that they are hurt and threatened. Compensation or overstriving is a strategy which is adopted in order to avoid failure. Many children who adopt strategies of compensation, or overstriving, may be regarded by many parents and teachers as ideal diligent students. To this category of student, failures and mistakes of any degree will have the effect of lowering the child's self-esteem.

Children who work too hard, who put an over-emphasis on school work and neglect social, emotional, creative, athletic and leisure activities have low self-esteem and are trying to compensate for their inner insecurity by "being the best" student. Their thinking is: "If I'm the best, will you love me, mum, dad and teacher?"³¹

If pupils are to conquer their fear or threat of learning they must be allowed the freedom to fail. They must feel comfortable to make mistakes, to ask questions that highlight their temporary ignorance and to venture trying their hardest. It is only under such conditions that pupils will be truly free to work towards personal excellence. In such an ethos, freedom to fail becomes freedom to learn.¹² In addition, failures and mistakes are not the focus of blame, ridicule or punishment but rather are seen as opportunities to extend learning. It is important that teachers and parents accept their pupils for what each has attained to date and for the potential that each one, individually, has to attain limitless success. If this unconditional acceptance is absent little or no learning can occur.
This does not mean, however, that parents or teachers should not establish an acceptable code of behaviour and set reasonable standards. Every student has the ability to respond to some level of excellence and should be held to those standards.

(iii) Development of the Whole Child

Present knowledge of intellectual ability confirms the view that each pupil has unlimited potential for both thinking and learning. It is important however not to view intellectual ability just in terms of narrow academic success. A pupil can demonstrate intellectual ability in music, art, science, technology, gardening, crafts, sport, design, communication skills, etc. It is important that teachers promote personal excellence irrespective of the particular domain to which it refers. John Gardner outlined this view in the following statement:

"An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher. The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity, will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water."

It is vital for the enhancement of pupil's self-esteem that we adhere to the educational principles of promoting the harmonious development of the child and cater for individual differences.

(iv) Disruptive Behaviour

There are children in almost every school who will not respond favourably either to rewards or sanctions as part of a school's code of behaviour. Such behaviour is a major source of stress for many teachers. Maladaptive behaviour portrayed by a child such as inattentiveness, annoying habits, rudeness, cheeky remarks, laziness or temper tantrums are usually because of a deeper underlying problem/conflict within the child. However, research suggests that "students maladaptive behaviour is always right" because they demonstrate the inner confused state of the child. These children are often confused because basic emotional or physical needs have not been or are not being met.
Many of them possess a level of inner chaos, which implies that there is a dearth of any internal boundaries. These children may experience no limits or boundaries at home either, so the restrictions imposed by the school are not respected by these individuals and thus they are manifesting all the signs of low self-esteem. Because of their low level of self-esteem they lash out and rebel as a means of obtaining some degree of personal power. Such maladaptive behaviour is unacceptable in the classroom because it disrupts teaching and learning. However, the child who is engaging in this type of maladaptive behaviour knows of no other means to get needs met. For such children the imposition of sanctions or punishments will only have a short term effect. In order to ensure that such a child is convinced about the inappropriateness of behaviour, it is worth investigating the root cause of the problem. This can be achieved as part of a process where the teacher endeavours to work towards an affirming, respectful and close relationship with the child. It is important that when such children engage in responsible behaviour that these actions be reinforced and that when such children engage in disruptive behaviour that these behaviours be corrected in a positive but firm manner.

There are numerous ways of maintaining order and control in a classroom. The ultimate aim of a teacher faced with a pupil who has discipline problems should be that the student would eventually take responsibility for his/her own behaviour. This can only happen where the teacher is able to maintain control without diminishing self-esteem.

A distinction should be made, however, between the student who takes pleasure out of disrupting a classroom and the student whose disruption is a manifestation of deeper underlying problems. When a child is deliberately trying to disrupt a class and is obviously enjoying it, it is important that the teacher expresses displeasure or anger at the inappropriate behaviour. This can be achieved by correcting the behaviour and not the person. 7

Stating that “I am annoyed when I find paintbrushes destroyed because they were not washed properly” is conveying a message that
it is the behaviour which is the focus of attention rather than the pupil. On the other hand, saying to a child that s/he is stupid is tantamount to engaging in a personal attack, which will be recognised as such. Empathising with the disruptive child in a genuine way is certainly one way to begin to tackle the situation in a positive manner. It may be easier in the short term to re-establish discipline by threatening the imposition of punishment. This will, however, not work in the long term and will also result in lowering the child's self-esteem.

(v) Link Between Self-Esteem and Bullying
An Irish study on victimisation and bullying found that victims had significantly lower self-esteem than those children who stated that they had never been victims. The victims of bullying regarded themselves as more troublesome, more anxious, less popular, less happy and less satisfied. It was found the more children were victimised, the greater were their feelings of inadequacy. The findings of this study confirm those of previous studies. The results also indicated that victims who in turn bullied had even lower self-esteem than the "pure" victims. This category of children had poorer intellectual and school status, were less happy and satisfied and had greater behaviour problems. Bullies, in general, had a statistically lower self-esteem than those children who were not bullies. However, this study found, contrary to earlier research into bullying, that both bullies and victims had low levels of self-esteem. Both bullies and victims were found to have common characteristics such as the perception of themselves as being less popular with peers, more unruly, being more unhappy and more discontented than children who had not been participants in bullying either as bullies or victims.

The manner in which children respond to feelings of low self-esteem will vary according to the temperament of the child. Extroverts will tend to fight the cause of the annoyance while introverted children will tend to be shy and timid. Pure bullies tend to be more introverted than pure victims. Therefore, the common stereotype of the bully as confident and tough is open to challenge. It would also appear that if the factors contributing to the bully's low self-esteem
endure then the undesirable behaviour of the bully will also continue. The study also highlights the high percentage of children who both bully and are bullied (i.e. bully-victims). It showed that these children had more unhealthy psychological qualities than either the pure victims or pure bullies. The results of the study suggest that low self-esteem is indeed a factor which is linked to bullying and that self-esteem is an important factor in determining behaviour. It would appear then that perhaps the most effective way to terminate bullying is to emphasise the enhancement of self-esteem.

(vi) Self-Esteem and Social Problems
Many sociologists regard delinquency simply as a lower socio-economic class problem. This however does not explain why not all lower socio-economic class juveniles become delinquent. Pupils with a positive self-concept are generally unlikely to become involved in juvenile delinquency, while delinquents are found to demonstrate low levels of self-esteem.

Research has also shown that there is a close relationship between self-esteem and factors that cause students to drop out of school. A critical factor in school drop outs is not hostility towards school but rather deep-rooted feelings of inadequacy and internal blame. Many students feel that they have neither the intelligence nor the ability to be successful, factors which are direct manifestations of low self-esteem.

Low self-esteem has also been linked with drug and alcohol abuse. One of the traits of students with low self-esteem is that they look for means to avoid conflict. Drugs and alcohol act as a means of escapism. Low self-esteem is also found to be responsible for neurosis, anxiety, defensiveness, and sooner or later, to alcohol and drug abuse. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that when efforts are made to enhance the self-esteem of students, the occurrences of vandalism, crime, discipline problems, truancy and other aspects of negative behaviour are reduced.

(vii) Emotional Conflict
Most teachers find it fairly easy to identify children who portray under-control and physical signs of emotional conflict rather than
children who display over-control signs. Under-control signs of emotional conflict include behaviours such as bullying, hyperactivity and destructiveness. Children who exhibit under-control behaviours are those “with the highest referrals to principals, school counsellors and back up psychological and social services. It is also of note that boys compared to girls are more likely to manifest their inner conflicts via under-control behaviours”. It is also interesting to note that in a survey carried out as part of the Report of the Special Education Review Committee (Dept. of Education (1993)) 89% of the pupils with significant behaviour problems were boys.

While over-control behaviours such as extreme perfectionism, over-diligence or shyness will not disrupt the learning/teaching of others in the classroom, the children who manifest these over-control behaviours are probably more at risk than those who portray under-control signs. The pupil who demonstrates behaviour problems is less likely to develop serious forms of mental illness than the pupil “who responds by withdrawing and displaying characteristics of fearfulness, sensitiveness, suspiciousness and unsocialness”. It is interesting to note that girls more than boys are more likely to demonstrate their inner emotional conflicts by displaying over-control behaviours such as those outlined above. It is clear that all children who demonstrate signs of emotional conflict in the form of under-control, physical or over-control signs all have, without doubt, self-esteem problems, which are related to their inner conflicts.

It is important, therefore, that the school ethos acknowledges that higher levels of self-esteem can influence the various interactions in the school, i.e. pupil–pupil and teacher–pupil. The next chapter will examine self-esteem issues in both the classroom and general school climate.
Every classroom is a separate social unit with its own particular set of norms and its own atmosphere. Yet, it is clear that the atmosphere of the classroom does not operate in a vacuum as every classroom is an integral part of the larger social unit of the school. The social climate between schools may vary as there are many factors which can contribute to the social climate in a school. For example, socio-economic levels, parental expectations, appropriate level of resourcing, suitable school structures, access to ancillary and professional services and support of management and parents.

It has been suggested that an effective school has three characteristic patterns of behaviour:

(i) high expectations of students;
(ii) staff emotional responsiveness; and
(iii) effective leadership.¹

High expectations imply a belief in the enormous capacity teachers and students have for learning. Such teachers and pupils are continually affirmed and encouraged in their pursuits where the emphasis is generally on effort rather than attainment.

Emotional responsiveness refers to valuing and respecting the uniqueness of each individual within a school, whether that be pupil, teacher, parent or principal. Common features of emotional responsiveness would be encouragement, affirmation and support. In other words, behaviour which would diminish a person’s level of self-esteem should be eliminated, e.g. cynicism, sarcasm, ridicule.
The third most important factor for an effective school is effective leadership. To be successful, principal teachers need to concentrate on building self-esteem and confidence among staff members; to promote and foster an open and shared environment, and to cultivate a climate whereby trust and loyalty can be developed.²

THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL
An effective leader will have a high level of self-esteem. This means that as a principal s/he will be:

- approachable;
- practice clear and direct communication;
- frequently affirm teachers and students;
- flexible;
- assertive;
- willing to listen;
- able to make decisions;
- able to challenge others; and
- sympathetic with regard to mistakes and failures.

The ability to interact effectively with staff is probably a key determinant of an effective leader. It is here that good listening skills, approachability, consultation, and assertiveness are vital for success. An effective principal will also be willing to establish a close liaison with parents. The establishment of an effective whole school approach is an outcome of successful management. Within such a management system, the principal carefully steers an approach of shared responsibility where every staff member of the school is involved in the evolution of an ethos in which every individual is committed to the development of a school environment, where each individual is respected, valued and affirmed.³

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND SELF-ESTEEM
Good classroom management should be focused on "educating children to take responsibility for themselves".⁴ All children should be aware of their responsibilities in the classroom, in addition to the sanctions which will be imposed if they fail to meet those specific responsibilities. The teacher is then in a position to explain that a decision to fulfil or not to fulfil those
responsibilities lies with the pupil. Assigning responsibility to pupils for their behaviour and "believing in their ability to meet it are powerful boosts to their self-esteem". Part of such successful classroom management entails continually reminding children of their responsibilities.

Classroom management which focuses on the development of self-esteem will utilise positive disciplinary methods with the teacher demonstrating "a calm, high, self-esteem model". This will result in the creation of a conducive learning environment in which the children will be encouraged to ask questions, seek clarification of issues already discussed or take risks as they acquire new skills.

The enhancement of self-esteem of both children and staff is vital for the effectiveness of any school. Slotting the development of self-esteem into Environmental Studies, Religion or Health Education, is not the way forward. Self-esteem must not be seen as an additional aspect of the curriculum but as a commitment to raise the levels of self-esteem of children and teachers by means of positive and supportive relationships, where everyone is listened to, respected and encouraged. A school manifesting such an ethos:

- ensures that there is in place a code of behaviour agreed by staff, management, parents and pupils;
- does not just focus on punishment and sanctions for misbehaviour but has a clearly thought out system of rewards and incentives;
- encourages children to take responsibility for their own behaviour;
- has a policy on eliminating bullying;
- encourages parents to support school policies,
- has an all inclusive policy, making sure that any children who are different are not left out;
- explains to students that grades are not statements of their capability but only of their present level of knowledge;
- focuses on planning, appropriate teaching methods and assessments;
- is willing to talk to parents about their children's progress;
ensures that quiet children are given sufficient attention;

holds regular staff meetings; and

promotes a system of open communication in school to work towards achieving a high staff morale.

Schools should not just be concerned about enhancing a child's academic ability but in the total development of children as human beings. Increasing evidence suggests that many schools identified of late as "effective schools" ascribe their success to an emphasis on the promotion of self-esteem at school level. Research indicates that more and more schools are realising that an emphasis on self-esteem complements the learning environment, decreases peer conflict and develops a more desirable teaching situation.

This chapter has outlined how self-esteem can be promoted within an effective school. Factors which promote school effectiveness are high expectations of students, staff emotional responsiveness and effective leadership. Good classroom management is also an integral part in the promotion of an effective school ethos, where the teacher integrates the enhancement of self-esteem into the teaching/learning environment in the classroom.
SURVEY ON TEACHERS’ ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-ESTEEM IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The survey "Teachers’ Attitudes towards the development of self-esteem in Primary Schools" was carried out by the Equality Committee during the months of December 1994 and January 1995. Following the piloting of the questionnaire in 12 schools in the Dublin region it was distributed to 1,500 practising teachers in the Republic of Ireland. A total of 661 returns was received in time for analysis which represents a response rate of 44%.

The objectives of the survey were to examine the attitudes and understandings of teachers towards:

- high and low self-esteem in pupils in primary schools;
- factors influencing the self-esteem of teachers;
- factors influencing self-esteem in primary school pupils;
- teacher/parental influence on the self-esteem of children;
- methods of promoting the self-esteem of children in the primary school; and
- current attitudes/trends influencing self-esteem in primary schools.

The study also sought to examine if the attitudes/opinions held by teachers are related to or influenced by gender or preservice/inservice experience to date.
PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS
The total of 661 teachers who returned completed questionnaires in time for analysis was composed of 26% male (N = 172) and 74% female (N = 489). This broadly reflects the actual gender composition of the teaching profession in primary schools in Ireland which is 23% male and 77% female (Source: Department of Education 1994).

Teachers in the sample were distributed across rural and urban schools, single sex and mixed schools. Teachers working in schools serving disadvantaged areas were included in the sample as were teachers serving non-disadvantaged areas. The respondents were well distributed across schools of all sizes and included schools with a majority of male teachers and schools with a predominantly female teaching staff.

Teachers in the sample were also identified in terms of the teaching position held. Included in the sample were principal teachers, remedial teachers, special class teachers, classroom teachers, home/school/liaison teachers, resource teachers and visiting teachers.

The sample also included teachers in permanent positions, temporary teachers and substitute teachers.

TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF SELF-ESTEEM

(a) High Self-Esteem
Teachers were asked to consider a number of characteristics associated with high-self-esteem and state from their own experience and observations whether they considered that these traits were indicative of a pupil with high self-esteem, at all times, occasionally or never.

The factors associated with high self-esteem were:

* is optimistic about his/her potential for success;
* believes others like him/her;
* accepts responsibility;
* is expressive of feelings;

...
• seeks support, advice and help when needed;
• is confident.

The following were the responses received:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH SELF-ESTEEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors associated with high self-esteem were:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is optimistic about his/her potential for success</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes others like him/her</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts responsibility</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is expressive of feelings</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks support, advice and help when needed</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is confident</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can accept criticisms without hurt</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can accept praise with pride</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that the trait teachers most associated with children with high self-esteem is “confidence” with nearly nine in every ten questioned reporting that a child with higher self-esteem is always confident. Teachers also firmly associate high self-esteem with the accepting of praise with pride, being optimistic about potential for success, the accepting of responsibility and a pupil’s belief that others like him/her. Teachers were less emphatic in their association of other traits to high self-esteem. Just over three in every ten questioned reported that a child with high self-esteem can always accept criticism without hurt.
(b) Low Self-Esteem

Teachers were also asked to consider a number of characteristics with low self-esteem and state from their own experience and observations whether such traits were actually indicative of pupils with low self-esteem, always, occasionally or never.

The characteristics associated with pupils of low self-esteem were:

- is constantly critical of self;
- has an inability to accept praise;
- has low motivation;
- is unwilling to accept blame;
- portrays poor social interaction skills;
- constantly needs reassurance;
- is shy;
- is an extreme perfectionist.

The responses received were as follows:

| TABLE 2 |
| CHARACTERISTICS OF LOW SELF-ESTEEM |

Factors associated with low self-esteem were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupil is constantly critical of self</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has an inability to accept praise</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has low motivation</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is unwilling to accept blame</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrays poor social interaction skills</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constantly needs reassurance</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is shy</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is an extreme perfectionist</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57
Teachers appear to associate needing reassurance, having low motivation and portraying poor social interactional skills with children with low self-esteem. The trait teachers least associated with children with low self-esteem is being an extreme perfectionist.

INFLUENCE OF SELF-ESTEEM ON ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL/PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
Teachers are virtually unanimous in their agreement that high self-esteem contributes positively towards both academic achievement and personal/social development.

High self-esteem contributes positively towards both academic achievement and personal and social development. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree

Disagree = 1%
Agree = 99%

This is also reflected in the written comments that were submitted with the questionnaire. One teacher reported that developing a positive sense of self-esteem among all children is probably "the greatest armour we can provide children with when entering the battleground of life."

Most teachers saw high self-esteem as essential in making academic progress and progress in life generally. Another teacher stated, "High self-esteem is vital to all learning and to the development of a child's own personality."
A number of questions were asked about factors that may/may not relate to self-esteem.

**BULLYING**

A majority of teachers stated that they considered both bullies and their victims to have low levels of self-esteem. 85% of teachers (N = 589) were of the opinion that bullies did not have high levels of self-esteem while 3/4 of those questioned (N = 496) stated that victims of bullying have low levels of self-esteem.

![Pie chart showing the percentage of teachers agreeing and disagreeing that bullies have a high level of self-esteem.](image)

- **Agree:** 15%
- **Disagree:** 85%

![Pie chart showing the percentage of teachers agreeing and disagreeing that victims of bullying have a low level of self-esteem.](image)

- **Disagree:** 24%
- **Agree:** 76%
JUVENILE DELINQUENCY
81% of teachers surveyed (N = 523) stated that they believed that there is a link between juvenile delinquency and a low level of self-esteem compared to 19% who did not.

![Pie chart showing 81% agree and 19% disagree]

DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS
79% of teachers (N = 520) associate children with low self-esteem with discipline problems in the school/class.

![Pie chart showing 79% agree and 21% disagree]
RAISING LEVELS OF SELF-ESTEEM
Teachers were almost unanimous (99.7%, N = 657) in their agreement that it is important for teachers to have an understanding of self-esteem. They do not however, view self-esteem as fixed or constant in an individual and believe that levels of self-esteem among pupils can be raised or lowered by:

(a) pupils themselves
89% of teachers (N = 590) stated that they believed it is possible for an individual pupil to effect change in his/her level of self-esteem compared to 2% who believed that pupils could not change individual levels of self-esteem.

In your opinion can a person affect change in his/her level of self-esteem?

Don’t Know = 9%
No = 2%
Yes = 89%
(b) teachers
99.6% of teachers (N = 658) believe that a teacher can influence the development of a child’s level of self-esteem.

(c) parents
98.9% of teachers (N = 651) believe that a child’s level of self-esteem can be influenced by his/her parents’ own level of self-esteem.

However, while recognising that both parents and teachers can effect change in children’s levels of self-esteem the majority (98%, N = 644) of teachers were of the opinion that it is essential for parents and teachers to work together in order to enhance self-esteem in children.

It is essential that parents and teachers work together in order to enhance a child's level of self-esteem

Disagree = 2%

Agree = 98%
GENDER AND SELF-ESTEEM
23% of teachers surveyed (N = 149) stated that they believed girls to have a higher level of self-esteem than boys. 20% of teachers (N = 121) were of the opinion that boys had higher levels of self-esteem than girls. The majority of teachers however, (57%, N = 363) are of the opinion that there is no difference between the levels of self-esteem of boys and girls.

In your opinion do girls have a higher level of self-esteem than boys or vice-versa?

- Girls Higher = 24%
- Boys Higher = 19%
- No Difference = 57%

THE PROMOTION OF SELF-ESTEEM IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL
In spite of the importance that teachers appear to attach to the development of self-esteem it appears that the issue has not been addressed widely in either preservice or inservice education.

80% of teachers (N = 502) reported that the development of self-esteem had not been addressed during their preservice education. Nearly seven in every ten teachers (68%) stated that self-esteem had never been addressed during inservice education courses.
Yet it appears that, at school-based level, teachers consider that the enhancement of self-esteem should be an integral part of every schools' philosophy and should be reflected in the school plan.

Further indications of the importance that teachers attach to self-esteem is to be found in the fact that 33% of teachers (N = 211) reported that the topic of self-esteem had been raised directly at staff meetings while only 15% (N = 100) reported that they never directly consider the issue of self-esteem when planning schemes of work for their pupils.

**THE PROMOTION OF SELF-ESTEEM IN THE CLASSROOM**

99% of those surveyed (N = 659) reported that the self-esteem of pupils can be enhanced where there is positive pupil–teacher interaction. In this respect 98% (N = 647) of teachers agreed with the statement that 'how teachers teach is as important as what they teach'.

Teachers were strongly of the opinion that all areas of the curriculum afford opportunities to enhance self-esteem. However, teachers' attitudes
appear to be dependent on the subjects that are taught. Statistically significant lower levels of support among teachers were found for the enhancement of self-esteem through the teaching of Irish, English and Maths than for P.E./Games, Art and Craft Activities and Religion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Curriculum (Irish, English, Maths, etc.)</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; Craft</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.E./Games</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Teachers were asked to rank six strategies which could enhance self-esteem in the classroom. The following are the responses received in mean rank order:

1. Value all children equally irrespective of ability.
2. Create a caring atmosphere.
3. Encourage each child to work towards achieving his/her potential.
4. Do not overemphasise mistakes and failures.
5. Discipline code based on positive reinforcement.
6. Attend courses on self-esteem.

LEVELS OF SELF-ESTEEM AMONG TEACHERS
Teachers in the survey were asked to indicate if the development of their own self-esteem was encouraged in their school. 64% of those who responded (N = 388) reported that their own level of self-esteem was positively encouraged at school compared to 36% who did not feel that it was developed.
The development of teachers’ own self-esteem is encouraged in your school?

Disagree = 36%

Agree = 64%

The survey then sought to elicit teacher opinion on factors that might contribute to the development of their self-esteem in schools. Teachers indicated that the development of effective communication among staff, the fostering of a consensus approach to decision making and the establishment of effective management systems in schools offered the greatest potential for the enhancement of teachers’ self-esteem within their schools.

FURTHER ANALYSIS
All responses received were analysed on the basis of the gender of the respondents and on the basis of whether they taught in disadvantaged or non-disadvantaged schools. No significant differences were recorded on the basis of this analysis.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS
The survey sought to discover teacher opinion about how the issue of self-esteem should be addressed in the future. 94% of teachers (N = 614) stated that the I.N.T.O. Inservice Unit should develop a course/module for delivery to teachers. 87% (N = 565) stated that if such a course were made available to them locally they would be interested in attending.
CONCLUSIONS
It appears from the research conducted that teachers have definite opinions about the traits they associate with pupils of high/low self-esteem.

Most teachers do not believe that the levels of self-esteem of girls differ from the levels of self-esteem of boys.

Teachers consider that it is important for them to have an understanding of self-esteem because it contributes to the academic, the social and personal development of their pupils.

Teachers do not view the self-esteem of their pupils as fixed and are of the opinion that levels of self-esteem can be raised by pupils themselves, their parents and their teachers.

In the development of teachers own self-esteem in school it appears that teachers value:

- effective staff communication;
- consensus decision making;
- effective management system.

Teachers believe that the development of children's self-esteem should be an integral part of the philosophy of every school.

Teachers in the survey indicated that the I.N.T.O. Inservice Unit should develop modules/courses on self-esteem in the Primary School. If such courses were organised locally it appears from the survey results that most teachers would attend.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"I'm delighted you brought up this topic. I hope it is just the beginning."
(comment from survey)

The overwhelmingly positive response of I.N.T.O. members to this topic suggests that this report, "Enhancing Self-Esteem", is just the beginning of an exploration of the value and merits of the development of self-esteem, from the perspective of both teachers and pupils. There was almost total support from the respondents that it is important for teachers to have an understanding of self-esteem. A majority of teachers also believe that they can influence the development of children's levels of self-esteem and that promoting self-esteem should be an inherent part of a school's philosophy.

The responses seem to suggest that while there is an overall high level of awareness of the issue of self-esteem, it has not been addressed in a formalised manner in the majority of schools.

The vast majority of the respondents stated that the I.N.T.O. should develop a course/module for delivery to teachers which suggests that teachers would welcome further training in the area of self-esteem, in order to become more aware of how to develop this important aspect of education.

The perception of teachers that self-esteem contributes to academic, social and personal development of pupils and that levels of self-esteem can be raised or lowered by pupils themselves, their parents or their teachers is confirmed by existing research in this area.

With regard to the link between equal opportunities and self-esteem it is encouraging to note that teachers do not believe that the level of self-
esteem in boys differs from that of girls. However, this report cites previous research which indicates that boys and girls manifest low self-esteem in different ways, with girls more likely to be quiet, shy and more withdrawn than boys, while boys tend to display low levels of self-esteem in a more outwardly focused manner. Research has also shown that girls’ achievement-related beliefs are generally more negative than boys, that girls more than boys attribute failure to low ability and that girls are less inclined to attribute success to high ability.¹

Self-esteem can be like a golden circle or a vicious cycle depending on whether the individual has a high or a low level of self-esteem. If a parent has a high level of self-esteem it will be easier for the child to internalise his/her lovability and capability than a child whose parents have a low level of self-esteem. The experience of self-esteem enhancement or reduction occurs from a very early age in the family in relation to how significant adults in the child’s life respond to his/her physical and emotional needs. Parents and other significant adults in children’s lives act as mirrors where they learn about themselves. As children grow older, other individuals such as teachers or friends will also act as mirrors to inform them who they are. The family, however, will continue to have a powerful influence on children even after they commence school.

From the perspective of the child therefore, it is beneficial if parents and teachers are partners in the educational development of the child. Parents should also have a clear idea of what it is the teacher expects from their child. In addition, it is important that teachers be told that a child may be upset at school because his/her granny has died or because there is a new baby in the family. A respondent to the report summed up this matter by stating:

“The perceptive compassionate teacher may sometimes be the sensor to spot the pupil’s malaise when the home/parent may not be sufficiently alert or equipped to understand a child’s difficulties.”

Within the school context it is important that teachers acknowledge the link between the level of self-esteem of the students in their classes and their own levels of self-esteem. It is also important for teachers to be aware that an individual can actually effect change in his/her level of self-esteem.
Teachers in the survey were positively disposed towards the concept of self-esteem. They indicated their interest in attending courses to increase their awareness of how to enhance self-esteem in students and how to recognise the signs and symptoms of students who have a low level of self-esteem.

Through inservice education and training realistic ways and means of encouraging the enhancement of self-esteem can be developed at school policy level and in classroom practices and teacher-pupil interaction.

As one respondent stated:

"A teacher who makes children aware (a) that it's o.k. to make a mistake; (b) that there is often much to learn from mistakes; and (c) that their behaviour is unacceptable but they themselves are good people, will create an atmosphere conducive to personal growth for the child."

The comments in the survey illustrate clearly that teachers have a heightened awareness and interest in the enhancement of self-esteem in the classroom. A selection of these comments are printed in the Appendix of this report.

Self-esteem enhancement has to be looked at within the context of the whole school environment. As another respondent stated:

"I don't think it's a topic which can be taught in isolation from the entire ethos of the school."

The Principal can set the tone with regard to the enhancement of self-esteem in schools. The following suggestions may be considered as part of a programme of enhancing self-esteem within the school climate.

Is there, for example:

- Respect for both pupils and teachers?
- A code of behaviour in place?
- A good system of communication among staff in the school?
An emphasis on effort rather than performance?
- A commitment to raising the level of self-esteem of teachers and pupils by means of positive supportive relationships?

It is hoped that this report will contribute to a wider debate on the influence of self-esteem in education, particularly in light of public awareness and support for the development of policies which include the enhancement of self-esteem as an integral component; for example, in areas related to the hidden curriculum, equal opportunity, bullying, child abuse prevention and relationships and sexuality education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- SCHOOL PRACTICES AND POLICIES
This report confirms that teachers have a clear understanding of the importance of self-esteem in the academic, social, emotional and personal development of children and adults. In light of the recent focus on this topic across the spectrum of the curriculum, this report recommends that self-esteem should be an integral part of school policy and that school planning should reflect the enhancement of self-esteem in the school's ethos and in classroom practices. It would be important also that the Department of Education, the NCCA, and all the partners in education underpin and support the promotion and development of self-esteem.

- INCAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS TO ENHANCE THEIR LEVELS OF SELF-ESTEEM
A large majority of teachers surveyed in this report indicated that they were interested in attending courses on self-esteem and that this issue had not been addressed at all in their pre-service education. This report recommends that courses or modules on self-esteem should be an integral part of pre-service education and in-service programmes.

- CO-OPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOL AND HOME
The findings of this report show that an overwhelming majority of teachers agree that co-operation between school and home is essential
in enhancing children’s levels of self-esteem. This report supports on­
going communication between home and school about self-esteem and related issues and recommends that opportunities should also be provided for parents to acquire further information and education, in order to raise their own levels of awareness about the influence of self-esteem.

† FURTHER STUDY
Further analysis on the importance of self-esteem in the teaching/learning process should be undertaken in the Irish context.
The following is a representative selection of comments from teachers on the role of self-esteem in education.

**GENERAL**

**Teacher 1**
"If teachers had smaller numbers and therefore more time—they could spend time giving more encouragement, have more time to listen to the needs of individual children and have better one to one contact with each child. This would help the self-esteem of both teacher and pupil at the same time.

**Teacher 2**
"I don't think it is a "topic" which can be "taught" in isolation from the entire ethos of the school. It is something best reinforced informally and nurtured through a "thousand nameless acts of kindness and of love."

**Teacher 3**
"Developing a positive sense of self-esteem among all children is probably the greatest armour we can provide children with when entering the battleground of life."

**Teacher 4**
"Self-esteem (lack of) is the basis for many of the discipline problems in school."

**Teacher 5**
"A caring staff within a well-run properly-disciplined school, where fairness is integral to day-to-day running of affairs, is the key to raising self-esteem."
Teacher 6
"Over emphasis on 'progress in the curriculum' aspects of education has led to the neglect of self-esteem."

Teacher 7
"I believe self-esteem is something that can be developed in both adults and children, therefore, it is important that we, as teachers (contributing to children's self-esteem) would be conscious of this in our daily work."

CLASSROOM

Teacher 1
"Create an atmosphere in which every child can achieve at his/her own level or pace and where each individual effort/success is acknowledged as such and not measured against the progress of any other individual."

Teacher 2
"Every child has a talent which should be encouraged. Academic ability should not be the sole criteria."

Teacher 3
"Everyone needs his ounce of glory", "Mol an oige etc." Occasional praise, the setting of tasks within the child's ability, help to develop that child's self-esteem."

Teacher 4
"Children don't have to be like someone else to be valuable."

Teacher 5
"The classroom can be an ideal place to help a child to grow, or otherwise. A child who is not helped by teacher to develop greater awareness of his/her own worth is in danger of developing into, a silent, non-participating pupil or an aggressive, attention seeking one."

Teacher 6
"Always being aware of how correction should be done without damaging self-esteem."
Teacher 7
"A teacher who makes children aware (a) that it’s O.K. to make a mistake, (b) that there is often much to learn from mistakes, (c) that their behaviour may be unacceptable but they themselves are good people, will create an atmosphere conducive to personal growth for the child."

Teacher 8
A positive system of teaching can enhance self-esteem, praise and reward for improvement works wonders particularly with the weaker children. I believe a negative approach to the same weaker pupil would wipe out any self-esteem they might have."

Teacher 9
"A child who may be weak academically can be brought to the fore in areas such as sport, drama etc.—the extra attention or praise gives the child more confidence and self-belief."

Teacher 10
"We spend far too much time in school pursuing academic goals to the almost complete exclusion of the more important hidden curriculum, development of self as a person in tune with oneself."

Teacher 11
"I think a system of rewards and praise should be established in each classroom to reward effort rather than achievement."

Teacher 12
"Self-Esteem should not be an optional extra, but should be built into all subjects. There is little learning involved without it."

Teacher 13
"Self-esteem is often neglected in the concern for covering the curriculum. It is part of the hidden-curriculum."

PUPIL
Teacher 1
"Children have no inhibitions about solving their problems if they know they are being listened to, given their rights, not compromised or manipulated."
Teacher 2
"A child who is valued for self rather than results has a head-start."

Teacher 3
"A child’s relationship with a teacher will result in either enhancement or lowering of self-esteem."

Teacher 4
"All children blossom under praise and encouragement."

Teacher 5
"If a child feels good about him/herself than they will achieve more. Self-esteem should not be measured by academic achievements."

Teacher 6
"Success to even a small degree in any aspect of life can increase a child’s self-esteem."

Teacher 7
"High self-esteem is vital to all learning and to the development of a child’s own personality."

Teacher 8
"For a child to make progress he/she must have a good feeling about him/herself. Parents have a vital role in a child’s self-esteem."

Teacher 9
"Every child in school has the ability to be good at something—sport, art, reading, general knowledge, carrying out school duties etc. Therefore, there is opportunity to develop each child’s esteem."

Teacher 10
"Any slight increase in a child’s level of self-esteem will have positive benefits for life."

Teacher 11
"Every child should realise they are special."
PARENTS

Teacher 1
"Communication between parent and teacher often throws a better light on how the child perceives him/herself. Home-School Liaison Officers are needed in all schools and better back-up services."

Teacher 2
"I have read several articles on schools who have succeeded in raising the self-esteem of pupils by encouraging parents in their efforts to continue their own education."

Teacher 3
"A child’s level of self-esteem is usually apparent in junior infants. Therefore, home is very important in fostering high levels of self-esteem in a child."

Teacher 4
"A stable, loving family is the single most important factor in enhancing a child’s self-esteem."

Teacher 5
"The teacher has to work with parents in order to have any kind of significant/lasting effect."

TEACHER

Teacher 1
"Teachers can play a pivotal role in development of self-esteem and can help children with poor self-esteem to become more confident. Obviously, the influence of the home is paramount and parents must be alerted if a child has particularly poor self-esteem."

Teacher 2
"Teacher’s feedback to pupils influences self-esteem, e.g. encouragement of effort and attainment, specific positive feedback, prefacing correction with something positive, displaying work, having performances, inclusive
activities, setting realistic goals, and maintaining high standards. Teach children self-evaluation skills.”

**Teacher 3**
“The teacher has a crucial role to play in the positive development of self-esteem by setting realistic goals for his/her pupils and encouraging them to achieve.”

**Teacher 4**
“Positive re-inforcement, praise, encouragement, setting realistic goals for children, rewards, giving responsibilities, arranging project work, drama etc.—can all help increase a child’s self-esteem. The manner, tone of voice, body language etc. a teacher uses with a child is all influential, I believe.”

**Teacher 5**
“The teacher can give that sideways shove that might just break the rut.”

**Teacher 6**
“The teacher is the active agent in this process. His/her contribution is vital to the enhancement of self-esteem in pupils.”

**Teacher 7**
“Children develop with praise and emphasis on the child’s talents, not on his/her weak points.”

**Teacher 8**
“We learn our self-image from that which we see reflected in the eyes/face/manner of others. A teacher has ample opportunity to provide a positive mirror for the student.”

**Teacher 9**
“Self-esteem can be enhanced by communicating effectively, adopting appropriate attitudes in speech/assignments etc. Always respecting children’s sensitivities and rights.”

**Teacher 10**
“Self-esteem can be enhanced by positive reinforcement, verbal praise, rewards, drama, and accepting the pupil’s own level of performance. There is pressure on teachers to push pupils ahead, putting the curriculum before the child.”
Teacher 11
“A positive, affirming teacher can do much to help a child’s self-esteem. Criticism ridicule and put down messages can do much to damage a child. At all times the child must be aware that he/she is accepted for his/her person.”

Teacher 12
“The perceptive compassionate teacher may sometimes be the sensor to spot the pupils malaise when the home/parents may not be sufficiently alert or equipped to understand their/a child’s development of difficulties.”

Teacher 13
“A positive teacher realises the necessity to search out and reach out to a child who is negative about him/herself. There are numerous areas of a child’s life that can, by genuine sincere and positive comments be greatly enhanced and altered.”

Teacher 14
“A teacher can kick-start or boost levels of esteem and confidence by not putting children into automatic categories, by making sure they don’t fall foul of the “Self-fulfilling” and having negative expectations. If a teacher believes in a child and actively seeks a child’s talents and encourages a child, levels of esteem and confidence will be boosted.”

Teacher 15
“A teacher can influence development in a child’s self-esteem by praising him/her for the things he/she has a talent for and by working at a level which the child can cope with in the subjects in which he/she may not be quite as talented, this will allow the child to succeed at his/her own level in every subject.”

Teacher 16
“A teacher most certainly can enhance the child’s self-esteem by (a) praising the child (b) by not drawing too much attention to mistakes (c) the teacher can keep a watchful eye on the child’s socialising in the playground and encourage the children to involve everyone in games etc., (d) a teacher can enlist the help of parents and ask them to praise and help the child at lessons etc.”
Teacher 17
"After teaching for the past 35 years, I have come to the conclusion that the greatest gift I can give my pupils is a good self-image. If a child thinks he/she is making progress, he/she will feel good about him/herself, and will continue to strive."

Teacher 18
"Any teacher who takes the time to build pupils' confidence will see results. Have high expectations for pupils and let them know what you expect. With encouragement and guidance most pupils can do well. It is the joy of pleasing parents, teachers and themselves that motivates children. A positive attitude transmits itself to the children."

Teacher 19
"If a teacher is aware of a child having a problem with self-esteem, then that teacher can have a very important influence on increasing that child's level of self-esteem."

Teacher 20
"How we deal with children may either enhance or diminish self-esteem. We need to be aware of the kind of language we use and avoid comments which may undermine a child."

Teacher 21
"A teacher can raise child's levels of self-esteem through encouragement and praise of the child's efforts in their work, and also by giving them a sense of responsibility."

Teacher 22
"For self-esteem to become a part of everyday school life teachers first need to experience a high level of self-esteem themselves and, therefore, be more able to lift the level of self-esteem in their pupils."

Teacher 23
"I think it is a vitally important area in our profession, especially in today's changing world. We as teachers need to be educated and trained in the whole area."
REFERENCES

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2


CHAPTER 3


10. Ibid, p. 60.


CHAPTER 4


CHAPTER 5


6. Carroll C., p. 182.


10. Humphreys T., Ibid.
11. Humphreys T., Ibid.

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