

TRUE SPIRITUAL EDUCATION - SOULS IN MOTION

"The spiritual teacher is the first to follow his own teaching; he brings down into the world of action his spiritual conceptions and ideals."

How can we transform environments of learning from the present unhealthy state of education into environments which promote the development of wisdom? We must strive towards this goal if we, the educators, are to participate in the creation of our Lord's promised "new race of men". With the spiritually learned or "spiritual philosophers", Abdu'l-Bahá states that they "ever express their high and noble thoughts in actions". Wisdom and progress therefore result in actions that are of benefit to the common good of civilization thus fulfilling the purpose of life.

Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute is a private, residential, co-educational secondary school where students become active agents in their own learning and diverse perspectives are respected. The staff and students at NCCI are committed to the development of moral leadership, scholarly attainments, and global citizenship. There is a special focus on the arts designed to harness the power of creativity to uplift the spirit and raise social consciousness.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Nancy Campbell Collegiate Institute provides a complete academic curriculum meeting Ontario, Canada, Ministry of Education standards, from Grade 7 to completion of the Ontario Secondary School diploma.

The founder postulates that formal education in Canada has developed from the one room, low priority rural schoolhouse to a system based on mass production methodology with an excessively large number of students in each school. The educators at NCCI believe that a more optimal learning environment can be achieved using the "Micro School Model" with a maximum of one hundred to two hundred students. The small population enables everyone at the school to know each other in classes with a low student/teacher ratio. The school is designed to create what those involved believe to be a more comfortable, natural workplace. Through this small community environment, it is believed the quality of education improves. It also strives towards excellence in the development of each student's unique potential.

NCCI is committed not only to the scholarly achievement of their students, but also to the development of moral leadership and global citizenship.

The moral capabilities are based on the philosophy and framework of the Moral Leadership Capacities Unit taken from Nur University. The basic elements include a new conceptualization of the role and capabilities of the leader. The six elements of the new mental model for leadership are:

- 1.) Orientation of service to the common good;
- 2.) The purpose of leadership: individual and social transformation;
- 3.) The twin moral responsibilities to truth;

- 4.) Transcendence through vision;
- 5.) Belief in the essential nobility of the human being;
- 6.) The development of capabilities.

NCCI has added another element - Belief in a world-embracing vision - to the conceptual framework that was implied in the original model, but NCCI believed that it needed to be explicitly set forth as a foundation element.

BELIEF IN A WORLD-EMBRACING VISION

This is the only element that has not previously been explained in the Nur model as it was not included explicitly.

"The greatest challenge facing the world community...is to release the enormous financial, technical, human and moral resources required for sustainable development. These resources will be freed up only as the peoples of the world develop a profound sense of responsibility for the fate of the planet and for the well-being of the entire human family.

This sense of responsibility can only emerge from the acceptance of the oneness of humanity and will only be sustained by a unifying vision of a peaceful, prosperous world society. Without such a global ethic, people will be unable to become active, constructive participants in the world-wide process of sustainable development.

NCCI believes that world citizenship needs to be understood as a universal principle. It is based on the principle of the oneness of the human race as mentioned above. It involves the cultivation of "...tolerance and brotherhood, nurturing an appreciation for the richness and importance of the world's diverse cultural, religious and social systems and strengthening those traditions that contribute to a sustainable, world civilization."

MORAL LEADERSHIP

In addition to the moral framework outlined above, NCCI, has designed and implemented other unique programme components at the high school level in an effort to reinforce and develop the chosen moral capabilities in their students. The high school programme includes the following components.

1. Moral Framework and Capabilities

2. World Citizenship Curriculum Courses

Moral Dilemma Discussion Method - Moral education should make use of such methods as the Moral Dilemma Discussion method and not simply a rote learning method of instruction. The MDD method confronts a child or youth's cognitive system with moral dilemmas that are realistic, that is, real enough to arouse their moral emotions.

a) Personal Transformation - The goal of this course is to assist students to develop the art of judgment when faced with moral dilemmas.

b) World Issues - This course is designed to expose students to the various interpretations of the emerging global order. In this course students are challenged to identify and analyze issues and trends from an international perspective and develop well-reasoned and moral solutions to world challenges.

c) World Religions - Students will explore the world's diverse belief systems in order to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of their neighbours' beliefs and values in the global community.

3. Mentorship Programme Using Guided Reflection

The mentor serves as a consultant to the student in the setting of goals for his or her development, thus ensuring individualized attention to assist in releasing each student's latent potential into action. A necessary element is the availability of competent advice and of opportunities for reflection. Only when the learner becomes very autonomous is s/he able to evaluate the outcomes of their moral decisions. They require guided reflection.

4. Service Programme and Social Role Taking

Moral autonomy is best achieved when individuals are given roles of social responsibility that meet their level of moral development and challenge their capacities of moral judgment competence.

5. NCCI Artistic Performance Workshop

The harnessing of the power of the arts to raise social consciousness is the objective of the workshop. It develops the imaginative faculties and stimulates meaning in the performers as well as the audience.

These various elements of the programme combine as a constellation or network to create multiple ways of teaching, sharing, learning and implementing the moral framework adopted to prepare students for their role as leaders in social development. NCCI has adopted nineteen moral leadership capabilities as the moral standard toward which the entire body of staff and students strive. NCCI believes that meshing diversity of colour, nationality, beliefs and temperament is a complex, but enriching endeavour when based on unifying principles of moral leadership.

Resulting Student Goals and Hopes

The majority of students stated that they had "increased motivation to become better" or a "desire to be better" people. Many felt "compelled to improvement or to transform: and they wanted to "give it all my attention", "give it all my potential." They stated it made them "realize how much we have to change ourselves" and that it "makes you want to help people." One student stated that she "got on fire to learn more" and wanted to "really...serve our community to make a change".

