

COMPASSION



Educating the Heart

Engaging Educators in an Exploration of Compassion for teaching and learning in Northern Ireland

Reflections, thoughts and actions following our private audience with
His Holiness the Dalai Lama
On 18th April 2013

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On the 18th April 2013, a group of over 50 educators, policy makers, community workers, researchers, and students gathered at St Joseph's Boys' School in Derry/Londonderry to engage in 'Educating the Heart: a Private Audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama'.

The idea of holding an event aimed at encouraging educators to bring basic human values to the forefront of education was inspired by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama's vision for an education system that instills love, respect and compassion into the hearts and minds of young people. For the Dalai Lama, an active awareness of such values is essential to the realisation of a global commonality that equips us to extend our humanity beyond our immediate family, friends, community and culture. Children in Crossfire is very much concerned with building a sense of global citizenship and believes that the Dalai Lama's call to educate the heart is an essential component to creating a sense of universal compassion as a foundation to promoting global peace and justice.

Children in Crossfire is determined that this initiative be seen not just as an isolated event but rather as the beginning of a process. Our objectives and initial aims for **Educating the Heart**, as set out in our earlier position paper, were as follows:

Educating the Heart Objectives

- ❖ To contribute to the embedding of compassion in teaching and learning into education policy and practice in Northern Ireland, with the potential of creating a model worthy of replication elsewhere globally
- ❖ To create an active and growing community which shares knowledge and experience, with the intent of moving towards compassion in action

Educating the Heart Aims

1. To explore the thoughts and feelings of participants in relation to the concept of compassion
2. To explore challenges and opportunities for embedding compassion into education policy and practice

3. To identify next steps and commitments to follow-up actions in relation to education for compassion

This paper is not intended to present an in-depth analysis of the event but rather to offer a brief synopsis, present participant thoughts and commitments that emerged during the event, inform you of Children in Crossfire's initiatives following the event and to encourage your ongoing engagement with the **Educating the Heart** process.



Overview of the Event

Facilitated in three stages, the event was intended to engage participants in exploring compassion as a tool for addressing personal, local and globally contentious issues whilst meeting curriculum demands for developing students as responsible global citizens.

Participants were initially invited to consider in writing what “compassion” means to them. Suggested definitions, thoughts and feelings arising out of this exercise can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

Stage 1: Introducing Compassion into Education

We were privileged to have speaking at the event Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi and Brendan Ozawa-de Silva both of Emory University, USA, where the Emory-Tibet Partnership was founded in 1998 as an initiative to bring together the traditions of Tibetan and Western civilization and science with the shared vision of educating both hearts and minds for the greater good of humanity. They presented their work in bringing basic human values into education through their development of a protocol for training compassion known as Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT).

Geshe Lobsang explained what the Dalai Lama means when he talks about secular ethics and the role of compassion in informing an ethical life. He described education as a tool, the meaningfulness of which depends on a combination of knowledge and warm-heartedness. He spoke of the need to create a more holistic education that addresses the whole person, a secular education appropriate for the global village we live in that focuses on ethics and values which go beyond religious and ethnic boundaries, a universal education.

In approaching this challenge Geshe Lobsang explained that he initially posed of himself a series of questions: - (i) whether basic human values could have benefit; (ii) whether this could be scientifically proven; (iii) whether compassion could be taught; and finally, (iv) whether it was possible to ground secular ethics and support the

cultivation of basic human values such that they can be acknowledged in a universal education curriculum.

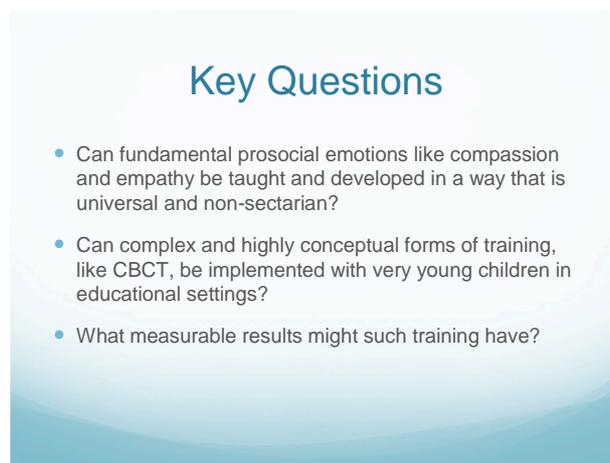
Geshe Lobsang continued by explaining the rationale behind CBCT, the important process of building self-awareness “one breath at a time” and, through this, of developing a compassionate relationship with ourselves, so that we could in turn conduct compassionate relationships with others. He stressed the importance of impartiality and of an understanding of interdependence, sharing his view that compassion can be cultivated out of identification, an acknowledgement that we all share the same basic aspirations. Geshe Lobsang concluded in presenting some preliminary results of scientific research undertaken at Emory University with undergraduate students and with young people in foster care in Atlanta.

A Method for Training Compassion: Emory’s CBCT Protocol

- Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) is drawn from the *lojong* tradition of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, but rendered into secular form.
- There are six key components of CBCT:
 - Developing Attentional Stability
 - Cultivating Insight into Thoughts and Emotions
 - Self-compassion
 - Developing Impartiality
 - Developing Affectionate Love and Empathy
 - Strengthening Compassion

Geshe Lobsang is currently working closely with other scholars and scientists associated with the Mind & Life Institute on an initiative entitled *Educating our Humanity: Towards a Pedagogy and Curriculum for Secular Ethics* the goal of which is to develop a pedagogy and curriculum for secular ethics that is age-appropriate from early childhood through to young adulthood. The Mind & Life Institute (<http://www.mindandlife.org/>) came into being in 1987 as a direct result of dialogue between the Dalai Lama and a collection of Western scientists and contemplatives. The Dalai Lama remains closely associated with the Institute and is enthusiastically supportive of its *Educating our Humanity* initiative.

Brendan Ozawa-de Silva then shared with us his experiences of implementing CBCT programmes with young children aged 5-9 in two schools in Atlanta. He provided us with some wonderful examples of using activities, games and stories to teach children crucially important concepts such as interdependence, impartiality and moral reasoning. He demonstrated the methods he has developed as part of the CBCT programme for helping young children to become aware of the damaging impact of destructive emotions and recognise the possibility of “catching the spark” and thereby averting “forest fires”. Brendan closed his presentation by sharing his preliminary research findings which demonstrate the positive impact these creative classroom methods, built around the CBCT protocol, have had on the children who have been able to participate in the study.



Whilst Brendan continues with his work at Emory University he is also now developing a Master’s Programme in Positive Psychology, Secular Ethics and Contemplative Science at Life University in Marietta, Georgia, USA, where an undergraduate program in Secular Ethics has also been proposed.

Following these presentations, Charo Lanao-Madden facilitated a discussion aimed at further drawing out the thoughts and feelings of participants in relation to compassion and other basic human values, and exploring the possible challenges and opportunities for embedding compassion into education policy and practice.

Although this paper is not intended to present and analyze the discussion, some of the key points raised included a deliberation of the word “secular” and what that actually means, a view that whilst existing curriculums did seek to address ethics and values in education, much more could and should be done, and an underlying belief amongst those involved directly in teaching that academic achievement was given far too much priority over values education.

Stage 2: The Arrival of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Dr Richard Moore

The highlight of the event was the arrival of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his participation in our discussions. In introducing the Dalai Lama, Dr Richard Moore expressed his delight that the event could be held at St Josephs’, his old school. He said that “any ideas of compassion, any ideas of forgiveness, all those principles were instilled in me by my family, by the local community here, and by the teachers of this school who spent a lot of time educating my heart”.

The Dalai Lama spoke to us about the importance of developing the hearts and minds of the young people we work with and of locating values education within the context of secular ethics. He shared his view that education has the potential to be either constructive or destructive and stressed that, in order to promote a meaningful and peaceful life, education must be coupled with warm-heartedness.

In speaking of Richard, who he refers to as his friend and hero, he highlighted what he describes as “the biological factor”, that we are born out of gentleness and compassion and that these qualities constitute our basic human nature or as he called them “the seeds of secular ethics”. He highlighted the power of choice when faced with difficulty and stressed, particularly to the young people present, that we all have the potential to be exemplars and that “the real practice of compassion is when we face challenge”. In expanding upon this theme the Dalai Lama referred to *The Way of the Bodhisattva* by Shantideva an 8th century Buddhist master and scholar, likening his writings to those of St Francis of Assisi, and recommending the audience specifically to chapter 6 which deals with patience and chapter 8 which addresses self-centered attitudes and altruism.

The Dalai Lama used the call for questions to address the issue of impartiality, advising participants that they should not feel the need for any formality. In doing so he spoke directly to the young people present, “I am no different from you, I am one of you mentally, emotionally and physically, we all want and deserve a happy life, we must exchange our experiences to find out how we might achieve that.” He stressed the crucial importance of investigation, of “opening our minds”, adding “without questions, how can we believe?” He warned that modern education was too often responsible for developing aggressive and self-centered attitudes and that educational systems must therefore introduce moral ethics which are secular in nature. He said that no single religious tradition, no matter how wonderful it might be, could ever be universal and that we must therefore face the problems of the modern interdependent world at a global level, with a “universal education”. He explained that his use of the word “secular” should not be understood as denoting a rejection of religion, but rather as an inclusive term which acknowledges and respects all religions as well as those of no religion.

In closing, the Dalai Lama responded to a question asking how educators might go about ensuring that values and values based education is taken seriously within our societies and within our education structures. He referred to ongoing studies amongst scientists that are being conducted around the global issue of introducing moral ethics into modern education systems and offered to share any relevant findings with us. He spoke of the complementary values of Buddhist psychology and Western science. From Buddhist psychology he was able to share some practical advice on the theme of destructive emotions in suggesting that when we experience destructive or negative emotions we must, out of self-awareness, try to find a contradictory positive emotion to counteract them. He described such wisdom and the ongoing studies to which he referred earlier as being necessary and relevant for the entirety of humanity. He finished by asking if the audience felt these initiatives to bring secular ethics into global education were “sensible” and “practical” but responded himself in saying that these goals were “not just dreams”.

Stage 3: Considering our Thoughts and Commitments

Following the departure of the Dalai Lama, Charo Lanao-Madden invited participants to share their immediate feelings and arising intentions to move to action in striving to bring compassion and other basic human values more firmly into education. After a period of short discussion in smaller groups, participants fed back their thoughts and commitments which were then gathered under specific headings and appear in Appendix 2 of this report. It is recognised that these observations emerged immediately following our engagement with the Dalai Lama, and do not account for any subsequent reflections that participants may have had. Nevertheless, we believe these are important to share as they give insight into identifying next steps for working towards embedding compassion into education policy and practice.

It appears clear from both the event and subsequent feedback that participants grasped the relevance of compassion at both personal and professional levels, that they view compassion as something which is important for them to nurture and develop within themselves and subsequently extend to their schools and wider communities. Despite identified challenges, such as an “over emphasis on academic achievement as opposed to values education”, there seemed to be a consensus as to the importance of developing compassion amongst children and young people. Participants identified a need to lobby decision makers in order “to convince people of influence about the essential role of values in education”. Ideas were also expressed for continued networking in order to build on and share the valuable work already underway in Northern Ireland whilst striving towards making compassion more apparent within education. It was also evident from participant thoughts and commitments that they were both open and eager to learn more and to explore compassion in greater depth through relevant research.

Children in Crossfire Statement of Commitment and Call to Action

Website Presence

Children in Crossfire are very much encouraged by the interest shown in the **Educating the Heart** event. Although all of the data collected from it has yet to be

analysed, we believe there it is ample evidence to justify the continuation of **Educating the Heart** as an ongoing process. We wish to encourage your ongoing engagement with that process and accordingly an additional dimension will shortly be added to the Children in Crossfire Website specifically devoted to **Educating the Heart**. This will include provision for you to connect with us, and therefore with this community, in order that we may all continue to share thoughts, experiences and ideas. We are particularly interested in hearing of any initiatives you, your colleagues in education and those you teach may have undertaken as a result of the **Educating the Heart** event and indeed of any existing initiatives or experiences that you feel may be relevant to it. Children in Crossfire is committed to promoting and nurturing the exemplar in us all and particularly in children and young people. We believe that all of these experiences have the potential to serve as examples to others seeking to explore, join or instigate similar initiatives. We therefore invite you to engage with us and with each other through the **Educating the Heart** section of our Website which will be launched in early 2014.

As well as providing facilities for your direct engagement with the **Educating the Heart** process our Website will include access to background information about the event, links to videos of the event itself as well as to material used in or created from it, ongoing news arising out of the **Educating the Heart** process and other information and links we believe to be relevant to it. Over time we hope to build upon this section of our Website so that it provides a valuable resource to those active in the **Educating the Heart** process, those wishing to engage with it and those searching for information about it.

Learning together with Emory University

Amongst the highlights of the **Educating the Heart** event were the presentations by our colleagues from Emory University, your enthusiastic interest in the concepts shared and indeed their interest in much that they discovered from those present. Children in Crossfire intends to grow that engagement with Emory University and with others who might contribute to this process. As a result of our ongoing collaboration Richard Moore was invited to participate in the October 2013 visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Emory University, of which he is a Presidential

Distinguished Professor. We look forward to sharing news and opportunities arising from this and other events and initiatives through our Website.

Bringing Compassion to our Teacher Training Programme

Children in Crossfire currently works with schools to deliver “Teachers in Development and Learning” (TIDAL), a capacity building course that provides teachers with the skills and confidence to use participative methodologies to engage young people in global education to enable them to become active citizens working towards a more just, equal and sustainable world. Following the initiation of the **Educating the Heart** process we plan to develop our TIDAL programme with a view to bringing a deeper understanding of compassion and other basic human values more firmly into education. We are currently in ongoing dialogue with our colleagues from Emory University in exploring the commonality of purpose that exists between their CBCT protocol and Children in Crossfire’s TIDAL programme. Our TIDAL programme is about raising awareness and critical thinking about particular issues or sets of issues. CBCT is aimed at cultivating specific emotions and mental states such as compassion, empathy, impartiality and gratitude. We are considering together the possibility of using CBCT protocols within our TIDAL programme (& vice versa) to deepen awareness of the issues we seek to address so that they sink in past an intellectual understanding and reach a deeper emotional level, where they become internalized and act as prompts for positive action in the world.

Conclusion

The **Educating the Heart** event was designed to be as interactive as possible. Children in Crossfire is anxious to promote your continued engagement. Accordingly we will be providing you with periodic updates of the progress of our ongoing initiatives and constantly seeking your input as we attempt to nurture and grow the active community created by the **Educating the Heart** event.

In his closing address at the event, Seamus Farrell, a trustee of Children in Crossfire, reminded us of the wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi who described peace as being *what will be when everyone is in right relationships with one another*. Gandhi said that “if you want to move towards this kind of peace you must begin with children” . Seamus

praised the Dalai Lama as the leader of a major religion for his invitation to all of humanity to join the task of creating a universal global ethic for **Educating the Heart**.

It seems fitting to conclude this preliminary report upon the **Educating the Heart** process with a final quote from Children in Crossfire’s honoured patron, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which is taken from his book *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*: -

“My hope and wish is that, one day, formal education will pay attention to what I call education of the heart. Just as we take for granted the need to acquire proficiency in the basic academic subjects, I am hopeful that a time will come when we can take it for granted that children will learn, as part of their school curriculum, the indispensability of inner values such as love, compassion, justice, and forgiveness.”

Children in Crossfire
December 2013



APPENDIX 1

What Compassion means to us

- The ability to move forward in a positive way
- Hope for a better future for our children and young people – our common ground
- To love unconditionally and walk in someone else's shoes
- Openness, warmth, richness – a quiet hand on hand in the hours before death, at times of vulnerability
- To have a deeper understanding of self and apply that to the way we care and empathise with others
- Relationships of equity and respect
- Respect and care for other human beings
- Caring and showing care for anyone at any time
- A high level of emotional intelligence
- Over my life time (so far) I have learned a little bit about the meaning of compassion. But learning never ends
- Compassion means to have the ability to reach out to those in need
- Empathy and consideration for others. Choosing to respond with this value within, working with others
- Promoting wholeness through awareness and questioning, listening and expressing, global, local and personal
- Responsibility to others as a basis of respect for their humanity
- The ability to look beyond your own needs and meet the feelings of others at a place where both of us can be at peace
- Empathy, understanding and respect for everyone
- To love our sisters and brothers as Christ did – unconditionally with humility

- Compassion is allowing everyone to be the best they can be. Showing humility, understanding and acceptance
- Allowing others to be who they are. Forgiveness, understanding and love. Having peace in yourself and acceptance of others
- To be caring and understanding, mimdfullness – walking in someone else’s shoes
- Doing to, treating and thinking of others in the way I would want them to think and act towards me
- Proactive kindness and care with the aim of making the world a better place
- Listening and working with your neighbour
- Suffering with, giving one’s heart to others – empty ‘self’
- The process to positive change. My soul, my heart – that is perfect, this is perfect. From the perfect, springs the perfect. If the perfect is taken away from the perfect the perfect remains. Everything is perfect as it is
- Heartfelf concern and kindness – empathy for others and the planet
- The impulse to relate to and help others for no material or personal gain

APPENDIX 2

Participant Thoughts and Commitments as Grouped on the day of the Event

Note: abbreviation for Children in Crossfire is CIC

PERSONAL

- ❖ Self compassion
- ❖ I want personally to try to focus more on my “inner” as opposed to “external” health and well-being
- ❖ Share my learning on compassion and educating the heart with my family
- ❖ Committed to “practicing” compassion rather that just trying to live compassionately!
- ❖ Fostering a family home in which values of gentleness and compassion are lived realities

- ❖ “Compassion is seen on bad days and struggles” – I’ll keep that in mind as it resembles by favorite MLK Jr. quote “One breath at a time”
- ❖ Share with my family
- ❖ Try to listen more
- ❖ Reflect
- ❖ Be happy!
- ❖ Be more attentive
- ❖ Develop “me” personally in my journey to understand compassion and work with others to help those in need
- ❖ To speak to family and friends about the challenges of compassion
- ❖ A breath at a time – work/family/volunteering/me
- ❖ To gain a better understanding of myself so as to achieve “self-compassion” therefore allowing myself to show more compassion towards others
- ❖ First, cultivate healthy “self-compassion” (accepting who I am, etc.) so that I can develop compassion to others (especially strangers!), and the sense of equanimity between myself and others
- ❖ To become more mindful and learn to enjoy every moment, learn to stop destructive thoughts
- ❖ To be more aware of the triggers or “sparks” that can lead to impatience, hostility, or non-compassionate behavior – and to take action to stop the “forest” burning down
- ❖ Spread the word – family, friends, work, staff, youth panel
- ❖ “The measure of a man is not during time of comfort and convenience, but challenge and controversy.” – resembles what His Holiness said and it is colossal for humanity to be compassionate always, regardless of personal circumstances
- ❖ I will take more time out each day to rest the mind and let the heart speak and direct the body...giving myself kindness so that I can know to give that gift to others

SCHOOL

- ❖ Promote, encourage, and further the role and number of integrated schools in Northern Ireland

- ❖ I want to find ways for our 7-year-old daughter to benefit from compassion training in her school
- ❖ Work to ensure that young children in our school and other schools who need nurturing continue to get it in both specialist Nurture Unit and generally throughout the school
- ❖ Return to Seattle with a renewed sense of purpose – to engage students in this work despite the institutional pressures, perhaps in spite of the school district. How can I continue to move students toward compassion and warm-heartedness in the high-pressure atmosphere of testing? We need to support passionate, creative teachers by lowering class sizes and giving time for collaboration.
- ❖ Interested in how CBCT could be developed in our schools... will look at model
- ❖ Make values more explicit
- ❖ Time management
- ❖ Curriculum and resources exist in Northern Ireland
- ❖ Further develop curricula for teaching compassion and the tools for supporting such teaching (story books, films, games, etc.)
- ❖ Build on the good work already taking place through:
 - PDMU
 - Shared education
 - Preschool learning
 - And make sure this is brought out through inspection reports
- ❖ Hope to see a change on the educational side of teaching the importance of inner values, compassion, and equality. Academic and more values learning should be equal to ensure all skills are developed
- ❖ Ensure that a way is found to continue the work started by Gordon Wilson, even though the Spirit of Enniskillen Trust has been closed down
- ❖ Miss no opportunities to develop compassion and tolerance in the lessons we teach
- ❖ I am committed to providing feedback to staff, and to generate discussion
- ❖ Develop assessments for pro-social emotions and track their impact over time (in terms of health, academic performance, behavior, etc.)

- ❖ Our schools need to be helped in recognising the valuable work they are currently doing in education for compassion. I will try to reinforce that message.
- ❖ Further develop the work our school has started on Educating the Heart, by looking at all options and possibilities
- ❖ Not to miss any opportunity to educate the heart, but to ensure it is not lost in the wider demands of a full educational experience

INFLUENCE (lobby and policy)

- ❖ Convince people of influence about the essential role of values in education
- ❖ Talk to decision makers in my context about the information and ideas
- ❖ Recommend teachers/CIC lobby decision makers in Department of Education about raising the profile of PD + MU (Personal Development) in schools, ask for training, sharing of practice
- ❖ CIC work with teachers to lobby decision makers about the importance of values education. There is an over emphasis on academic achievement instead of values.
- ❖ Unless we get DE (department of education) on board, this will not be taken seriously. We need to work to influence DE
- ❖ CIC lobby discuss ideas with DE and minister about compassion in education

NETWORKING (sharing learning and creating an active community)

- ❖ Contributing to helpful culture change in education, healthcare, and business
- ❖ Independently support?
- ❖ To be an active part of a growing community (initiated today) which shares ideas and tools and methods with a view to driving positive change, which we owe to our too often defrauded and unheard youth
- ❖ Bring this more explicitly into training and practice in UUM/Community
- ❖ We'll incorporate what we've learning in our global, video, and web-based youth outreach
- ❖ Include compassion in global education training
- ❖ Start conversations with others that I come in contact with through my work
- ❖ Reflect on the ideas from today and incorporate into a presentation to young leaders in business next week

- ❖ Share my experience of this event with students and teachers at Dame Allans
- ❖ Create a group from today to drive this all forward
- ❖ Work with Caroline, Charo, Seamus, Ciarnan and others (*all CIC representatives*)
- ❖ Articulating the theoretical possibilities underlying this conversation
- ❖ Work with Emory University to see more what they have done
- ❖ Use the word “interconnectivity” to its fullest sense – both in terms of our relationships (which never ends) but also using technology positively – the web is a tool of interconnectivity – we must use it positively!
- ❖ Share ideas and concepts with colleagues
- ❖ Spreading the ideas through a seminar with youth workers
- ❖ I will inform colleagues about this work being done and its potential at CCEA
- ❖ Bringing meaning to elements that are already there
- ❖ Work with CIC to find out more about educating the heart, and work together to make it happen
- ❖ Teaching others what I have learned today in the hope they too can share this journey
- ❖ Share with colleagues involved in similar work, the research and development being undertaken at Emory

LEARNING/CURIOSITY (continued learning/training needs)

- ❖ As educators we need to ask, “When will the education system value young peoples’ achievement in things other than exam outcomes?”
A more positive outlook on humanity as a whole
- ❖ Give adults training and support to help them with the programmes in place (such as peer mediation, forgiveness education, etc.) and ensure these continue
- ❖ To learn/train on implementing compassion training and bring this to my teacher training work
- ❖ Try to incorporate the ideas that all religious beliefs hold value and meaning and this unites us!
- ❖ To think about what I can learn from my young children about compassion or educating the heart – I feel children can teach us a great deal
- ❖ Continue the research and debate about evidence and outcomes
- ❖ Try to get more research in Northern Ireland on compassion

- ❖ I think we should get training on how to do this in the classroom
- ❖ Posing how, why, and when questions to staff to encourage training in emotional intelligence
- ❖ My dream is to create a play that embodies all the key elements of compassion training
- ❖ Read more!
- ❖ Seek to incorporate into teaching (higher education) and explore ways to develop a research (and action) agenda
- ❖ Explore (engage with) mindfulness
- ❖ To talk about a possible research project I can do with help of colleagues
- ❖ Read *Beyond Religion*
- ❖ I want to be part of creating/developing research into the benefits of the type of education in NI context
- ❖ Company across segregated schools
- ❖ Pilot programme of universal ethics in different sorts of schools
- ❖ Engaged religion to develop nonreligious
- ❖ Research the reference His Holiness mentioned as I believe not only would they benefit me, but also those who surround me
- ❖ Look at this in the light of the Model for Effective Practice (the Youth Work curriculum)
- ❖ Consider the application of mindfulness – particularly in relation to perspective, impartiality, training, and empathy
- ❖ Reflect, discuss, and think with colleagues, friends, family. Have discussions on where compassion fits in education. Everywhere?
- ❖ Keep connected to CIC to start process of developing new universal ethics programme for children
- build on existing good practice in NI
- enhanced with good ideas from other parts of the world, esp. meditation and self acceptance