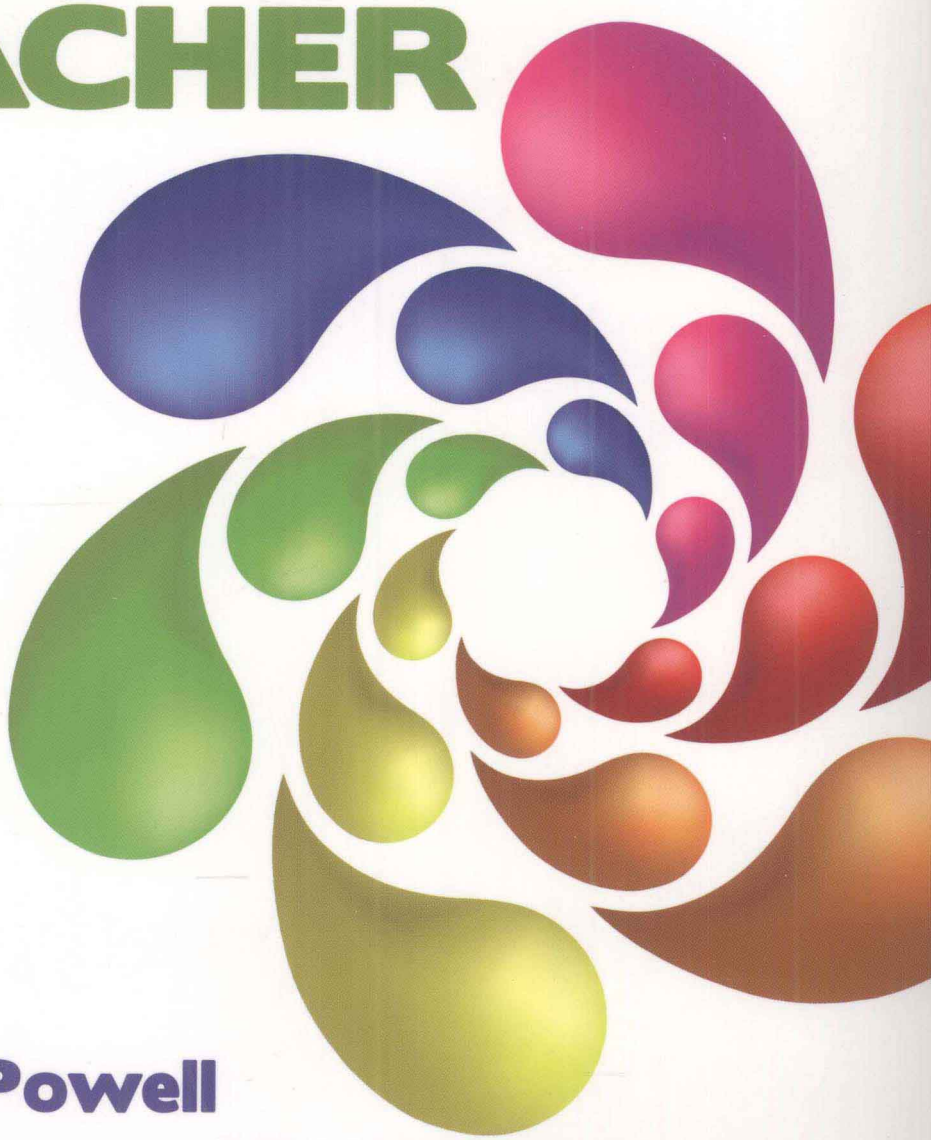
Becoming an EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT TEACHER



William Powell
Cohan Kusuma-Powell

Foreword by
Arthur L. Costa and Robert J. Garmston

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Foreword

Imagine yourself in a comfortable and casual setting. You listen in to a conversation and realize you are mesmerized by the talk. These authors clearly know the world you occupy, and you are captivated by the clarity, insight, and knowledge they display. But wait. Something is amiss. These men and women come from separate disciplines, some you normally wouldn't attempt to read, much less try to understand. But here they are, speaking matter-of-factly and down-to-earth with Bill and Ochan Powell providing glue and applications to their work with authentic, compelling, and sometimes humorous stories about school.

Drawing on vast research and years of personal experience, the Powells convey through vibrant school examples, appealing human vignettes, and illustrative classroom narratives that how teachers respond to stress, what teachers profess as their beliefs, how teachers adapt to classroom diversity, and how teachers process learning in their own style has a profound effect on student learning. The authors' vivid, personal, and intimate writing style brings us into classrooms, staff meetings, and parent conferences, and like a welcome but invisible observer, we interact with the personalities of numerous teachers, students, parents, and administrators as they deal with the complexities of school life. Magically, breaking through the usual fragmentation and academic language, the Powells create a practical book for every teacher and every person who works with teachers. Listen with them as they blend teaching implications with research from such fields as education, social psychology, anthropology, sociology, and neuroscience.

Meet Carmen, Matthias, Irshad, Melvin, Grace, Marina, Nishad, Pauline, and Stefano and other multinational students in stories of authentic challenges and celebrations teachers face. You'll get to know and feel like you're sitting beside Malcom Rigby during a grade-level meeting, observing in the classroom of Miss Elizabeth Crawley, or entering the case study of a student named Jonathan. These personalized, charming vignettes make the text come alive to help you understand the realities of school dynamics.

The authors of this book are not only educators, long practiced in our profession, but are accomplished authors. They write with compassion and have the ability to enter the world of students, teachers, and support personnel. They understand their insecurities, passions, and worries. They practice emotional, contextual, and cognitive empathy providing not simple answers but authentic responses to complex interactions. Each page has a sense of immediacy; the prose is tight and quick. The headings, such as "Pygmalion on Her First Date," "Let Them Learn Chinese!" "The Marshmallow Challenge," "Margaret: The Loose Cannon," "If Teaching Involves Acting, What Does the Audience Think?" and others, invite curiosity and draw us into the fascinating world of the schoolhouse.

For teachers, this book provides validation for the school and classroom situations in which they find themselves. As teachers learn more about themselves and understand personal stressors, this book provides practical suggestions for ways to respond. This tidy compendium of wisdom brings special gifts. First, the book validates all shades of teaching experiences without judgment. Next, it provides research-based answers to why teachers react and feel as they do in challenging situations. It offers not only practical tips borne of the authors' experience but activities that enhance their capacities for emotionally intelligent teaching. Finally, this extraordinary book enhances teachers' capacity for self-management, self-monitoring, and self-modification toward their own gain and the learning of students.

What do students learn that is not explicitly taught? While curriculum committees labor to map the curriculum, compose essential questions, decide on what's most worth knowing, clarify academic outcomes, and formulate assessment rubrics, we must also remember that children's most enduring learning may not be found in standards, benchmarks, and exit exams. Their most essential and lifelong learning stems from the display of their teacher's level of emotional maturity in the moment-to-moment response to the twists and turns of daily classroom life.

Students learn best through imitation of significant others. Research with mirror neurons suggests that imitation and emulation are the most basic forms of learning. Teachers, parents, and administrators realize the importance of their own modeling of desirable habits in the presence of learners. In the day-to-day events and when problems arise in schools, classrooms, and homes, children must see the significant adults employing positive, rational, thoughtful, trusting behaviors. Without this consistency, there will be a credibility gap that, in turn, produces stress that distracts from and even negates deep learning. As Ralph Waldo Emerson is quoted as saying, "What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say."

Since most student learning is "caught, not taught," the purpose of this book is to enhance teacher congruity in working with students. It encourages authentic and rational responses to situations, which in turn, allows students to respond with authenticity to the complex situations that they will encounter throughout their lifetimes.

—Arthur L. Costa, EdD, and Robert J. Garmston, EdD
Professors Emeriti, California State University
Sacramento, California

Preface

How to Use This Book

This book is written for classroom teachers, aspiring educators, school administrators, staff developers, and others with an interest in the relationships between teacher emotional intelligence and student learning.

It is based on two premises. The first is that teachers who have strong emotional intelligence support more effective and efficient student learning than those with only limited emotional intelligence. We will offer considerable evidence to support this contention. The second premise is that although some people seem to be born with excellent interpersonal skills and others not, emotional intelligence is malleable and can be developed. Put simply, teachers, even gifted ones, can choose to raise their emotional intelligence.

The structure of the book follows Daniel Goleman's (1995) five components of emotional intelligence (EQ) and represents an exploration of how these qualities relate to the work of classroom teachers, specialists, and administrators. The chapters focus on aspects of emotional self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social awareness, and relationship management.

Each chapter contains a discussion of some of the theoretical aspects of EQ illustrated with actual case studies drawn from the authors' more than 30 years experience in schools around the world. Following the theoretical discussion, each chapter includes a series of practical activities and exercises that teachers can use or staff developers can employ to facilitate professional development in the area of emotional intelligence.

The final chapter is a synthesis of the overarching ideas that connect teacher emotional intelligence with effective and efficient student learning.

Acknowledgments

The research for this book was funded by a grant from the East Asian Council of Overseas Schools (EARCOS), and we would like to express our appreciation to Dr. Dick Krajczar, the EARCOS executive director, for his support and encouragement. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Office of Overseas Schools at the U.S. State Department for ongoing support of our work in teacher professional development. Specifically, we would like to thank Dr. Keith Miller and Dr. Connie Buford. An abbreviated version of this book, titled *The Emotionally Intelligent International School Teacher: Why Teacher EQ Matters,* was published by EARCOS and was distributed to member schools.

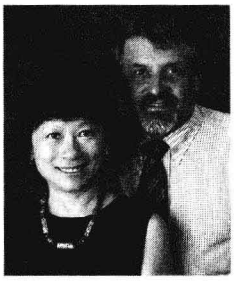
There were many individuals who contributed to this book—knowingly and unknowingly. We would like to extend our gratitude to Bambi Betts, director of the Principals' Training Center and CEO of the Academy for International School Heads; Sue Williams, curriculum coordinator at the American School of the Hague; Kevin Bartlett, headmaster of the International School of Brussels; Walter Plotkin, superintendent of the American International School of Dhaka; Nick and Rhona Bowley (Council of International Schools and the American School of Milan respectively); Areta Williams, head of the Overseas School of Colombo; John Roberts, superintendent of the International School of Kenya; and Dennis MacKinnon, superintendent of the International School of Yangon.

From the International School of Kuala Lumpur, we would like to thank Naomi Aleman, the curriculum coordinator; Grant Millard, the high school principal; and Ochan's previous teaching partner, Alex Smith.

Finally, we would like to thank our old friends and mentors, Bob Garmston and Art Costa. Your support and encouragement has been greatly valued.

Corwin gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the peer reviewers who reviewed this book.

About the Authors



William Powell has served as a school educator for the past thirty years in the United States, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, Indonesia, and Malaysia. From 1991 to 1999, he served as the chief executive officer of the International School of Tanganyika in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and from 2000 through 2006 as headmaster of the International School of Kuala Lumpur. He is the coauthor, with his wife Ochan, of *Count Me In! Developing Inclusive International Schools* (2000), and *Making the Difference: Differentiation in International Schools* (2007). Bill is a frequent contributor to educational journals and presents regularly at international educational conferences. Bill and Ochan have presented professional development workshops in more than forty different countries on five different continents. They focus their attention on teacher professional development and school leadership (Bpowell@eduxfrontiers.org). When he is not speaking at conferences, Bill can be found at his small farm in the French Pyrenees where he and a handful of sheep mount an annual battle against the European bramble.

Ochan Kusuma-Powell is cofounder and director of Education Across Frontiers, an organization that promotes teacher education toward the development of professional learning communities. A graduate of Columbia University with a doctorate in international education development, she has more than thirty years experience in international education. Ochan has developed and implemented inclusive special education programs in the United States, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Tanzania. She has been an outspoken advocate for children with special needs globally. Together with her husband, Bill, she coauthored an OSAC (Overseas Schools Advisory Council) publication titled *Count Me In! Developing Inclusive International Schools* (2000) and *Making the Difference: Differentiation in International Schools* (2007). Ochan is also the

author of *Parent Advocacy in International Schools* (2008). She is a trainer for the Teachers Training Center and an adjunct faculty member at Lehigh University and the State University of New York at Buffalo. When she is not at 36,000 feet, Ochan can also be found in the French Pyrenees engaging her twin passions of reading and cooking.

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Introduction

Not ignorance, but ignorance of ignorance is the death of knowledge.

—Alfred North Whitehead (n.d., para. 5)

Thomas wasn't having a good year in second grade. Handsome, athletic, and very socially sensitive, Thomas had a mild learning disability that was interfering with learning to read. He was also struggling with writing and basic arithmetic. He regularly failed to complete his work, and his teacher would have him stay in the classroom during recess to complete it. By mid-October, his classmates had picked up on the teacher's frustration with Thomas and were teasing him—calling him the "retard."

By November, Thomas was feigning illness to avoid going to school, and his mother was near despair. She had met with the teacher and the principal, and while they had developed a plan to get Thomas some extra tutoring in reading, this had done nothing to elevate Thomas's deep unhappiness and anxiety.

It was at this point that Thomas's mother brought her son for a consultation with Ochan, who was the coordinator of Special Services in the school. Initially, Thomas presented as a withdrawn and fearful child. He tended to avoid eye contact and would respond to Ochan's questions but would not initiate conversation. However, as the interview proceeded, Thomas became more comfortable and confident. He explained that he hated school because his teacher didn't like him. Ochan asked what made him believe this. Although socially astute and articulate, Thomas struggled with the question. He couldn't identify any specific comments or incidents, but he felt very strongly that the teacher's attitude toward him was one of disapproval and scorn.

We cannot know whether Thomas's perception of his teacher's attitude was accurate or not. We have no way of knowing what her true feelings about Thomas were. However, we can be certain that Thomas believed his

perception to be accurate, and it was having a profoundly negative impact on his learning. His emotions were interfering with his learning.

We can also probably make the conjecture that the teacher was unaware of Thomas's perception or her own behavior that may have caused it. Very few teachers deliberately display their dislike for students. However, a teacher with limited EQ may do so without either intending to do so or even being aware of it.

Following the consultation, Ochan reviewed at length Thomas's previous school reports, his IEP (individual education plan) and his psychoeducational evaluation. While he did have a mild learning disability, it was not such that it should be causing the catastrophic emotional meltdown that Thomas was experiencing. It was, Ochan concluded, Thomas's perception that the teacher didn't like him that was the most significant obstacle to his learning.

Ochan discussed the matter with the principal and requested that Thomas be transferred to another class. After some discussion, the principal agreed. The new teacher had a far more positive attitude toward Thomas's learning challenges, and slowly he began again to learn to read. Today, Thomas is in his late twenties, reads voraciously but slowly, and teaches fourth grade.

Much has been written about how teachers can support the development of emotional intelligence in their students. Less has been written about the relationship between a teacher's own emotional intelligence and student learning.

Historically, educators have tended to dismiss or ignore the role of emotions in learning. From Descartes through the Age of Enlightenment, learning was seen as the province of the rational intellect, and our emotions were perceived to cloud or befuddle cognition.

There were, of course, a few who challenged this duality. In his eighteenth-century treatise on education, *Emile,* Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762/1993) proposed that learning was a naturally occurring phenomenon that involves both our head and our heart. The Romantic poets celebrated the life of the emotions, and by the mid-nineteenth century, Charles Dickens (1854/2007) was writing scathingly in *Hard Times* about how education had been reduced to a "Gradgrindian" accumulation of facts.

Despite this handful of critics, there has been a widely held misconception that a duality exists between the intellect and the emotions; that cognition and the emotions are somehow separate and, in some cases, even diametrically opposed. This false dichotomy led to the belief that the brain was the seat of reason, logic, and analysis; whereas the emotions were irrational, counter to clear thinking, unpredictable, and generally suspect (especially in complex decision making). The

traditional classroom has welcomed the intellect but has tacitly instructed children to leave their emotions with their hats and coats in their lockers. The assumption was that school learning was intellectual and that our emotions either played no role in such learning or might even serve as a hindrance to learning.

This was a serious misunderstanding of how emotions and cognition are inseparably connected. Research conducted over the last two decades demonstrates clearly that our emotional and intellectual lives do not run on separate tracks but are connected at a most basic level (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1996; Pert, 1997).

We know now that all emotionally charged events receive preferential processing in the brain. They literally come to the front of the queue for processing, in some cases actually bypassing the neocortex. There are very good evolutionary reasons for this. For our cave-dwelling ancestors, emotionally charged events, for example, the charge of a woolly mammoth, evoked responses that were likely to be connected to survival and, more often than not, had significant future use.

Emotionally charged events also get preferential treatment in terms of our memory systems. Psychologists refer to this phenomenon as "flashbulb memory" (Brown & Kulik, 1977). Think back to when you first learned of an event connected to a powerful emotion: the assassination of John F. Kennedy or Martin Luther King Jr.; the *Challenger* tragedy; or more recently, the attacks of September 11, 2001. The chances are that you will be able to remember exactly where you were, what you were doing, and who you were with. Our emotions play a powerful role in determining what we pay attention to and what we select to remember. "An emotionally charged event is the best-processed kind of external stimulus ever measured. Emotionally charged events persist much longer in our memories and are recalled with greater accuracy than neutral memories" (Medina, 2008, p. 211).

There is compelling evidence that emotions also have a great deal to do with how we organize and create our sense of reality. Emotions drive how we prioritize our attention—what we select to focus upon and what we choose to ignore. They regulate our behavior and support us as we create meaning from the world around us.

Both in the classroom and outside it, emotions are sources of information about the physical and social world around us. Emotions associate our learning with pleasure or pain, as was the case with Thomas, and can result in retreat or perseverance. Emotions—the visceral thrill of a new insight or the excitement of a fresh mental connection—have the power to foster an enthusiasm for learning. This so-called hot cognition (Caine & Caine, 1994) is addictive and can lead to a passion for lifelong learning.

While teachers do not have absolute control over the emotional weather of the classroom, they have a powerful influence over the affective climate. More often than not, their verbal and nonverbal behaviors and their displays of emotion, dispositions, and moods can have powerful effects upon their students. The emotions that teachers display—both consciously and unconsciously—can significantly enhance or inhibit student learning.

A PROBLEM SO SIMPLE THAT EVEN BILL COULD SOLVE IT

As a child, Bill grew up in Britain. When he was eight, his teacher instructed him to go to the blackboard and solve a long-division problem involving the British currency then in circulation (pounds, shillings, and pence). This was a fairly complex procedure since Britain had not yet moved to the decimal system. There were four farthings in a penny, twelve pennies in a shilling, and twenty shillings in a pound. In front of the class, Bill struggled unsuccessfully with the problem. After a few minutes, the frustrated teacher came to the front of the classroom and announced that she would put on the board an arithmetic problem that was so simple that even Bill could solve it. She wrote up a three-digit addition problem. However, by this point Bill was feeling such intense stress that concentration was impossible. To the amusement of the rest of the class, Bill was unable to perform even the most basic calculations.

Clearly, the teacher exhibited a lack of one of the fundamental characteristics of EQ: empathy. And as a result, Bill's feelings of anxiety and humiliation interfered with his learning.

Recent brain research tells us a great deal about the effect of stress on learning. If high stress or powerful negative emotions have evoked the fight, flight, or freeze response, the amygdala (our emotional mission control) will block the passage of data into memory and will reduce the blood flow to the neocortex (the center of executive function and critical thinking) causing it to shut down (Sylwester, 2007).

WE TEND TO WORK HARDER FOR THOSE WHO CARE ABOUT US

Contrast the following scenario: During her elementary school years, Ochan's family moved a great deal (her father was employed by the United Nations). Her experience in school in Bangkok and New York had not been particularly successful, and Ochan had attributed her

less-than-stellar performance to her own intellectual ability. That was until her dad was transferred to Addis Abba and Mrs. Joseph came into the picture.

Mrs. Joseph was a fourth-grade teacher at the Nazareth School in Addis. At the very start of the school year, she set out to come to know her students and to make personal connections to them. She expressed interest in her students and tried to design learning activities that would appeal to their learning styles. She was patient and cheerful. She cared deeply about her students and was unabashedly hopeful and optimistic about their achievement and progress. By the middle of the first term, Ochan reported to her parents that not only did she like Mrs. Joseph, but also she thought Mrs. Joseph liked her. For the first time, Ochan was enjoying school, and this was reflected in her increased effort. By the end of the year, Ochan's confidence, commitment, and competence had improved to such a degree that she was double promoted to the sixth grade.

In the United States, a nationwide survey of several hundred middle and high school students asked whether they worked harder for some teachers than for others. Three out of four of the teenagers answered in the affirmative, and the reason they gave was that these teachers cared about them. The authors of the survey concluded that effective schooling relies almost entirely on creative and passionate teachers (Crabtree, 2004).

TWO PREMISES

This book is based on two premises. The first is that teachers who have strong emotional intelligence (EQ), or social competence as it is sometimes called, create classroom environments that support more effective and efficient student learning than those teachers with only limited EQ. We will offer considerable evidence to support this contention. The second premise is that teachers can develop their emotional intelligence. Although some people seem to be born with excellent interpersonal skills and others not, emotional intelligence is malleable and can be learned. We believe that this is an area of teacher professional development that has been overlooked in the past and has rich potential for improving student learning.

The phrase *emotional intelligence* comes to us from the groundbreaking work of Reuven Bar-On (Bar-On & Parker, 2000) in the 1980s and the subsequent conceptualization of EQ by John Mayer and Peter Salovey (1997). It was popularized by a book with the same title by Daniel Goleman (1995). Goleman's contention is that emotional intelligence is actually more important in terms of success in life than what we have traditionally thought of as IQ. Subsequent to the publication of *Emotional*