



**BANBURY  
CROSSROADS  
SCHOOL** EST. 1979

## **Our Philosophy & Practices**

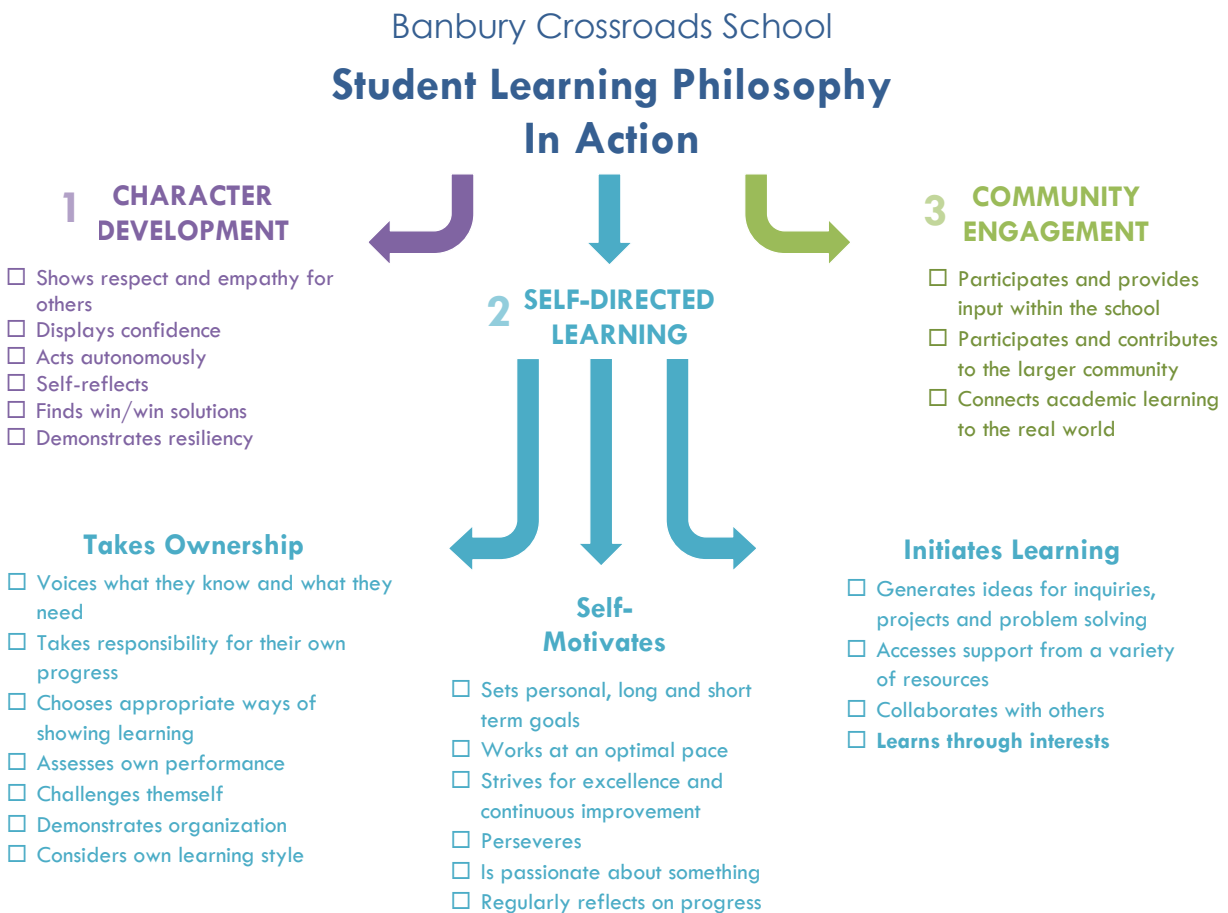
### *Benefits for student life*

- ▶ At Banbury, one of our major goals is to address the needs of individual students. At Banbury Crossroads, one of our major goals is to elicit autonomous and self-accountable behaviour from our students. We have set up a self-directed learning environment in order to do this. In practice, this means that all individual students participate in self-directed learning to the utmost of their capability. Some students, both young and old, are self-directed when they enter the school. Others have lost that ability through previous educational experiences, and need to retrieve it. This means that all of our students are at varying places on the continuum of self-directed learning. Our intention is to help each one of them to progress through the stages until they are fully self-directed. At that point, they will demonstrate the initiative and self-responsibility to exhibit all of the following characteristics. We monitor their progress along the continuum throughout their time at Banbury.
- ▶ At the ultimate point of students' development of autonomy and self-direction, they will:

### *Take ownership*

- ▶ Challenge themselves
- ▶ Voice what they know and what they need
- ▶ Demonstrate organization
- ▶ Choose appropriate ways of showing learning
- ▶ Assess their own performance
- ▶ Consider their own learning style
- ▶ Take responsibility for their own progress

- ▶ Students at Banbury are visible and nurtured. This helps them to develop confidence to challenge themselves beyond their current level of skill development, and to define reasonable and achievable tests of their abilities. They are encouraged to voice what they know and what they need, in order to pursue their own goals. They learn organization and time-management tools that fit their personality and academic needs. They also choose appropriate ways of demonstrating what they have learned. They continually assess their own performance with feedback from their teachers and peers, show initiative in rectifying misunderstandings, use mistakes as guideposts to further learning, and welcome gap teaching by their instructors. They become aware of their personal learning style, and adapt their academic pursuits to take this style into account. Overall, they take responsibility for their own social and educational behaviour and progress.



## *Initiate learning*

- ▶ Generate ideas for inquiries, projects and problem solving
  - ▶ Access support from a variety of resources
  - ▶ Collaborate with others
  - ▶ Learn through interests
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- ▶ We have designed the foundations of Banbury Crossroads to provide a multi-faceted and enriched, yet well-balanced and stable learning opportunity. Within this freeing environment, students at Banbury are encouraged to show initiative in following where their innate curiosity leads, in their human quest to examine their surroundings and master the complex facets of their culture. Through this process, they discover what is intrinsically motivating for them— they learn who they are and what they feel passionately about. They learn how to generate practical ideas for inquiry and problem solving, and to gather support from people and resource materials. They become advocates for their causes, and they are motivated to persist in their exploration until their curiosity is satisfied for the moment.
  - ▶ Students of any age learn best through pursuing their particular interests. Significant learning for humans is generally goal-oriented: when anyone has a challenge, a need or an unfamiliar situation to cope with, an integrated approach of exploring a variety of topics and tasks is necessary to fully understand and appropriately address them. That is a project, and by definition, a project must be engaging, useful and meaningful. We encourage young people to build upon their natural curiosity by noticing certain elements of their curricular work that particularly appeal to them. Then, when they use their senses to create exploratory or explanatory projects around these elements, this experiential learning becomes a powerful tool to examine and appraise the plethora of information they uncover. Information alone is useless—students need to sift out the relevant and useful bits from those that are immaterial, illogical, misleading and even harmful. This process needs input from adults; it is a collaborative effort, and accessing people of a variety of ages adds a more balanced and deeper dimension to the analysis.

# Self-Motivate

- ▶ Set personal, long- and short-term goals
  - ▶ Work at an optimal pace
  - ▶ Strive for excellence and continuous improvement
  - ▶ Persevere
  - ▶ Are passionate about something
  - ▶ Regularly reflect on progress
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- ▶ At Banbury, the personalized nature of learning means that adult mentors have the time, personal knowledge and supportive attitudes to highlight and nurture the awareness within students that they are, indeed, empowered. They have the ability and right to make real choices that affect their lives. Students can only be aware that their actions have been initiated by themselves, if they can see the cause-and-effect connection between their decision-making and these actions, and some discussion with caring mentors is helpful for producing this enlightenment. Therefore, on a daily and weekly basis, students here examine their accomplishments in collaboration with their teachers, so that they may reflect on their progress. We are purposely cultivating self-motivation at this school, and this requires personal awareness and the ability to make decisions regarding the fulfillment of needs and interests. This includes making decisions about the minutiae of how to follow through on those wishes, goals and dreams, so that they may actually act upon those decisions with precision, care and persistence. Coercion is anti-Banbury. It is anathema to our teachers and other staff members. We know that behaviour will be effective, engaged and enjoyable only if students buy into the decision and get themselves through the process of learning. We know that they do not need or want to be coerced. All they need is to care enough about their own educational progress; then, they will choose to work at an optimal pace for them. We know that they have absorbed the general atmosphere of the place when they strive for excellence and continuous improvement, for their own sake. Ultimately, we love to see the flowering of their passions, for that is the way to their developing a sense of purpose to their lives.

# Develop character

- ▶ Show respect and empathy for others
  - ▶ Display confidence
  - ▶ Act autonomously
  - ▶ Self-reflect
  - ▶ Find win-win solutions
  - ▶ Demonstrate resiliency
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- ▶ We recognize the fact that during a child's life in school, they develop as a whole person, not just intellectually and physically. They change from a child to a young adult in those 12 to 15 years. This means that we need to facilitate their growth emotionally, socially, philosophically and creatively. From the child's point of view, they are developing their character—they are creating habit patterns, values and beliefs that will define their future selves. From the adult point of view, we must be mentors who are worth following, imitating and listening to. We want Banbury young people to be empathetic, kind and respectful towards others. They need to understand that they are important people; they also need to hear the message that everyone else is important too! This double understanding will produce unselfish adults, and that is what our democratic culture needs. We want to help our students to develop their theory of mind, their understanding that other people have their own opinions, speculations, feelings and rights. This ability to put themselves in someone else's shoes, and to feel compassion, is necessary for devising win-win solutions to problems. Developing their character will allow them to participate in community ventures and collaborate on issues bigger than themselves, and will produce a significant sense of self-worth and deep satisfaction. This, in turn, leads to confidence and self-trust to act autonomously.
  - ▶ It takes courage to face what the world brings, let alone the challenges people create for themselves! The resiliency to evaluate intellectually, emotionally and morally, to then decide, act, assess, re-evaluate, change course, make responsive changes and re-assess makes our students into truly admirable, strong characters who will be able to survive and thrive, no matter what the future brings.

# *Engage in Community*

- ▶ Participate and provide input within the school
  - ▶ Participate and contribute to the larger community
  - ▶ Connect academic learning to the real world
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- ▶ We anticipate the day when our graduates will be responsible leaders in the larger society. We never forget that learning and life go hand in hand, and that the cultivation of an attitude of stewardship begins with awareness of the benefits of quality efforts, and unselfish participation in community ventures, beginning with the school community itself. They need to have a voice! These attitudes of caring and personal engagement are nurtured by making sure that students know the practical and long-term reasons for their intellectual work. Ultimately, this caring has to be motivated intrinsically, not extrinsically. We assist students in this cultivation of altruism and purposeful action by ensuring that concrete and relevant experience is valued. In fact, this contact with the outside world is necessary for a realistic view of it. Therefore, students are encouraged to go beyond the four walls of the classroom at every opportunity. Field trips, volunteerism, internships, personal interest projects, and kinaesthetic activities provide variety to their daily routine. Through bringing life to their studies, they will connect their academic learning to the needs of people in the real world. At Banbury, our desire to assist the leaders of tomorrow to become empathetic and understanding citizens, who lead through their outstanding character and competency, begins while growing in a place where the excitement, security and satisfaction of learning are present. It flowers further during adulthood, when they will find pleasure in pursuing their passions and contributing to the quality of the world within their influence.