


Mastery Practice in  
Teaching Boys

A Report to the International Boys' Schools Coalition

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# WHAT MASTER TEACHERS KNOW AND DO BUT CANNOT EASILY SAY

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St. George's School





## Tacit knowing is operationalized in doing—but not highly conscious


Polanyi, M. (1966), *The Tacit Dimension*, Doubleday, Garden City, NY.





# MASTER TEACHERS


- ✓ Sanskrit root: "mah" meaning "greater"
- ✓ Medieval French: "maitre" meaning exceptionally proficient



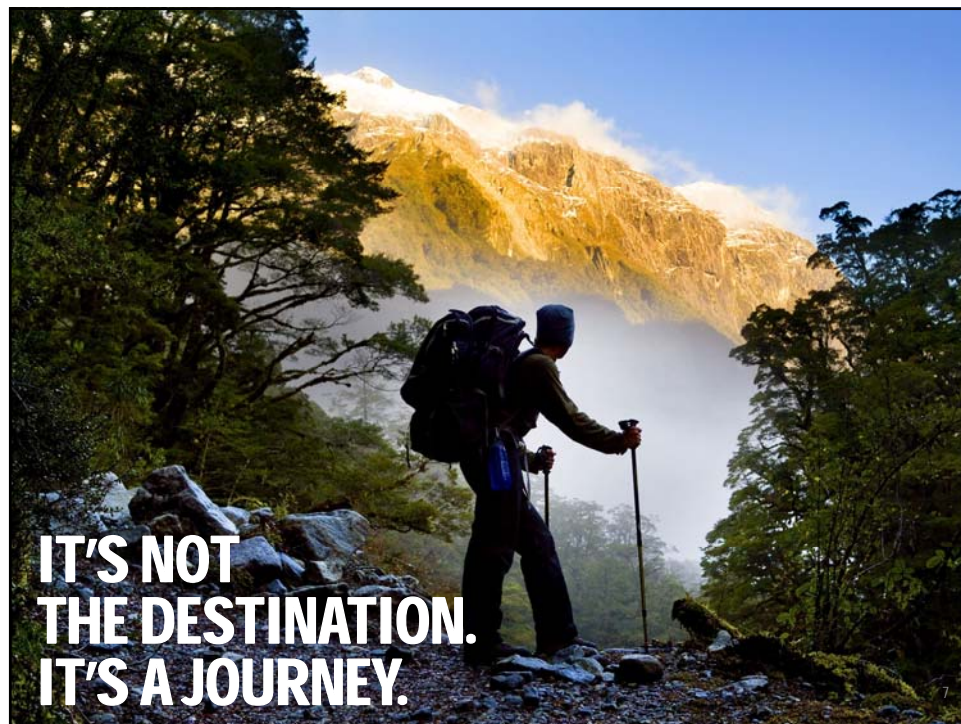
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# EXPERTISE IS KEY TO MASTERY

Research on expertise (Ericsson) suggests that many teachers will become competent ... but not everyone takes the journey to mastery



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## AGENDA

- ✓ What we did — a bit about the research
- ✓ Mastery—"No one right way"
  - ✓ Situational judgment
  - ✓ Built on foundational relationships
  - ✓ Powered by the 3 C's
- ✓ Developing situational judgment
  - ✓ Reflective practice
  - ✓ How it is supported



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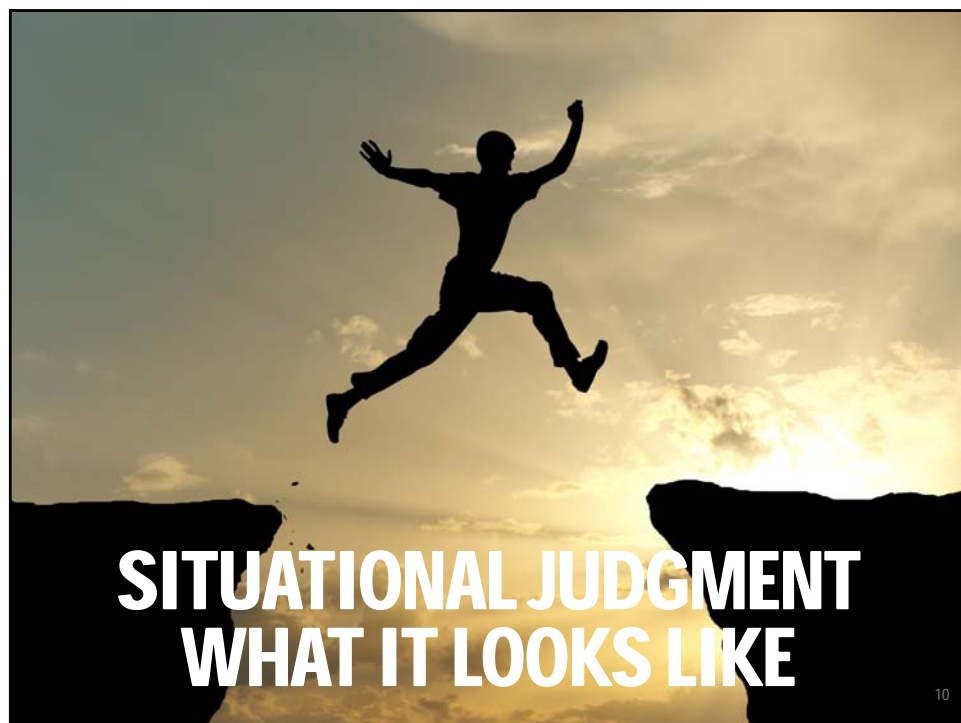


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# WE SOUGHT "STORIES" OF MASTERY

- ✓ 3 workshops:
  1. Buckley School
  2. Eton College
  3. Scotch College
- ✓ 95 teachers
- ✓ 70% men
- ✓ 77% high school secondary
- ✓ Most from independent schools/some public or state schools in the U.K. and Australia



- ✓ Skilled decision making in the face of new contexts, situations or challenges for which "old rules" do not apply ... "messy"
- ✓ Could take place in the moment or over time
- ✓ Intuitive ... based on expertise acquired from prior experiences ... hard to put in words



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## Buckley School: Supporting (VIDEO)



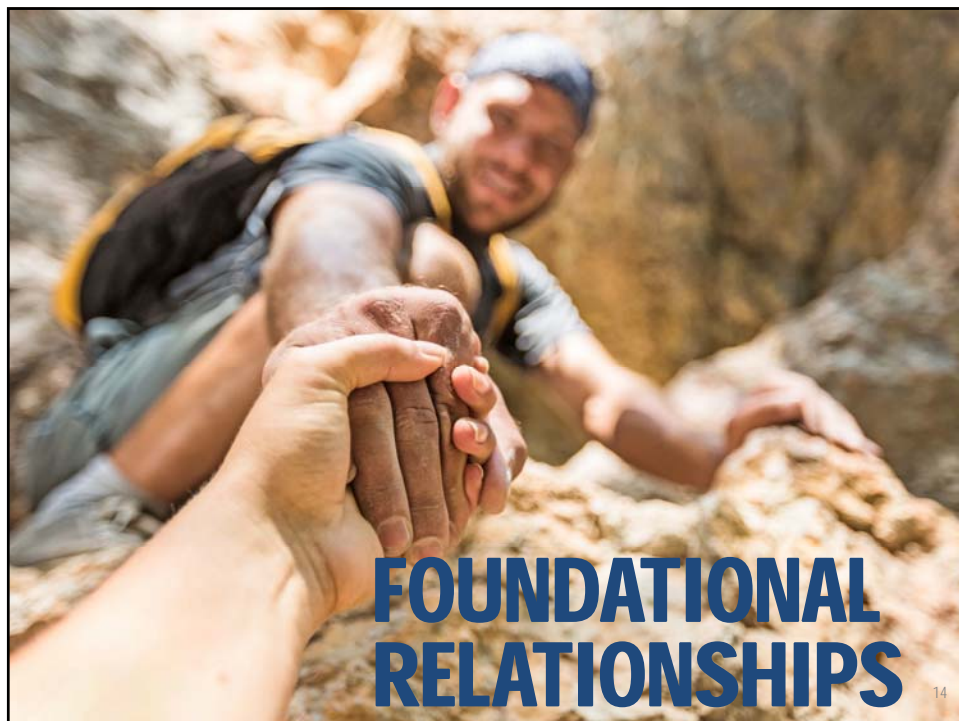


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They created holding environments with the right balance of challenge and support based on each boy's unique strengths and needs.

## RELATIONSHIPS

*Holding environments*—psychosocial context that caretakers provide to nurture infants (Winnicott, 1965)

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## RELATIONSHIPS

Research by Andrew Martin— Whether students trust, like or connect to their teacher is a powerful motivator or de-motivator— especially with boys!



**CONFIRMS IBSC RESEARCH  
BY REICHERT & HAWLEY ON  
RELATIONAL TEACHING**



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## RELATIONSHIP BUILDING SUPPORTS AGILITY IN “DOING THE RIGHT THING”



- ✓ Flexibly adapting to the unexpected
- ✓ Tailoring to each unique student
- ✓ Modeling, inspiring, challenging, encouraging boys

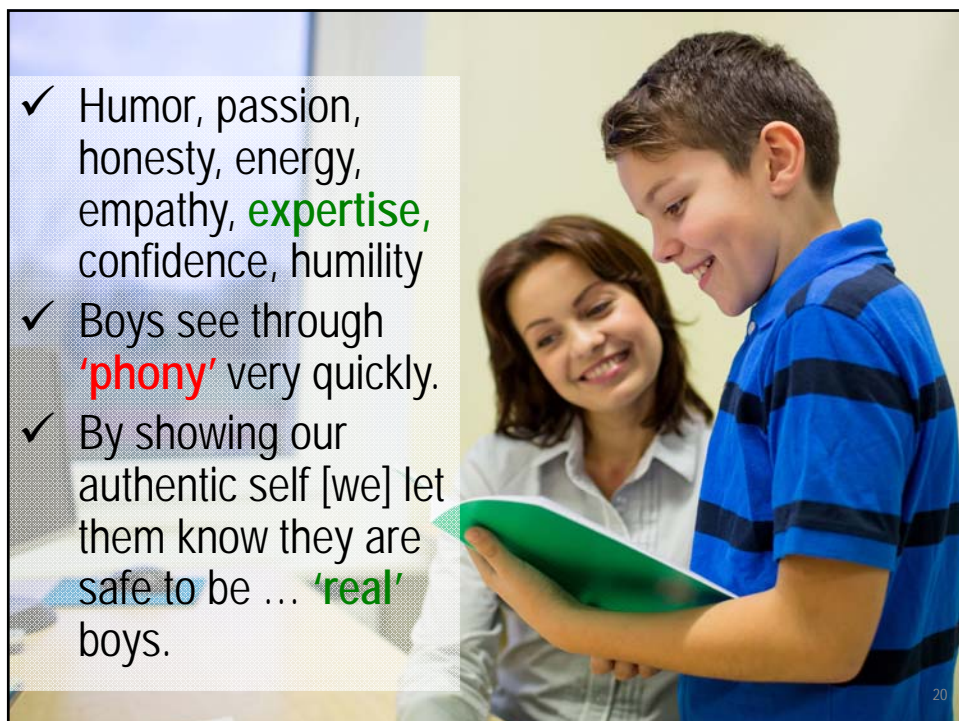


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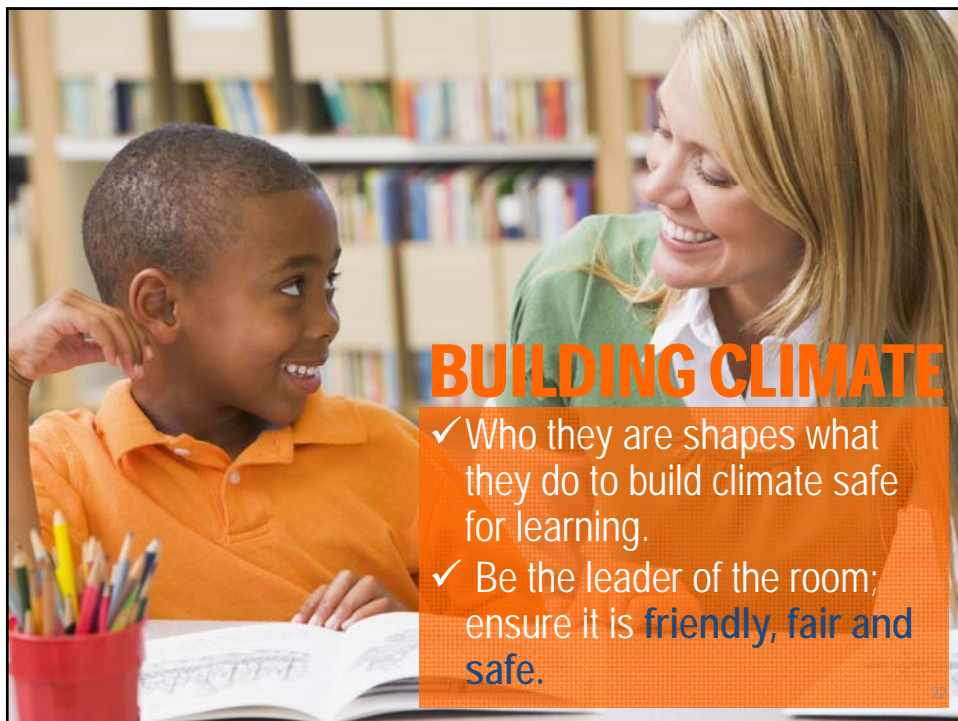


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## HOW DO TEACHERS BUILD CLIMATE FOR BOYS?

- ✓ Safety to encourage appropriate risk taking
- ✓ High expectations
- ✓ Clarity in goals, structure, and boundaries
- ✓ Predictability *and* spontaneity



## CONDUCTING INTENTIONALLY THOUGHTFUL PRACTICE












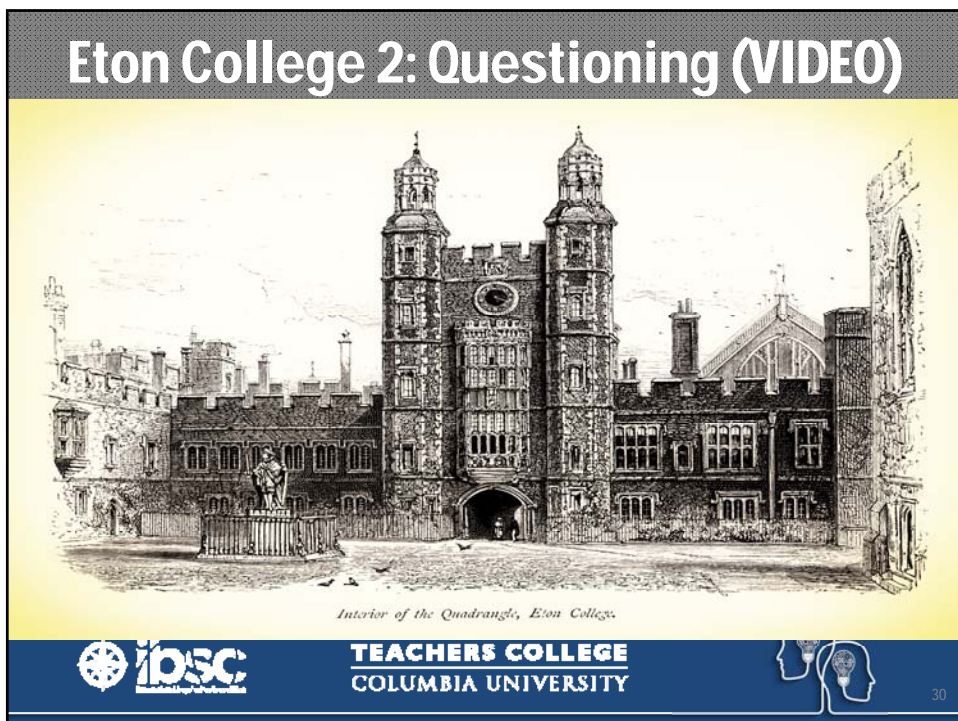
A man and a woman are hiking in a forest. The man is wearing a backpack and a plaid shirt, and the woman is wearing a blue plaid shirt. They are both looking at a map that the woman is holding. They are sitting on a log in a forest with many trees.

# PAIR SHARE


How did Michael:


- ✓ Use what he noticed to diagnose the situation?
- ✓ Build and leverage relationships to guide practice?
- ✓ Try out solutions and notice what happened?

## Eton College 2: Questioning (VIDEO)

A black and white illustration of Eton College, showing the interior of the quadrangle. The building is a large, historic stone structure with many windows and a central clock tower. There is a statue in the foreground.

*Interior of the Quadrangle, Eton College.*

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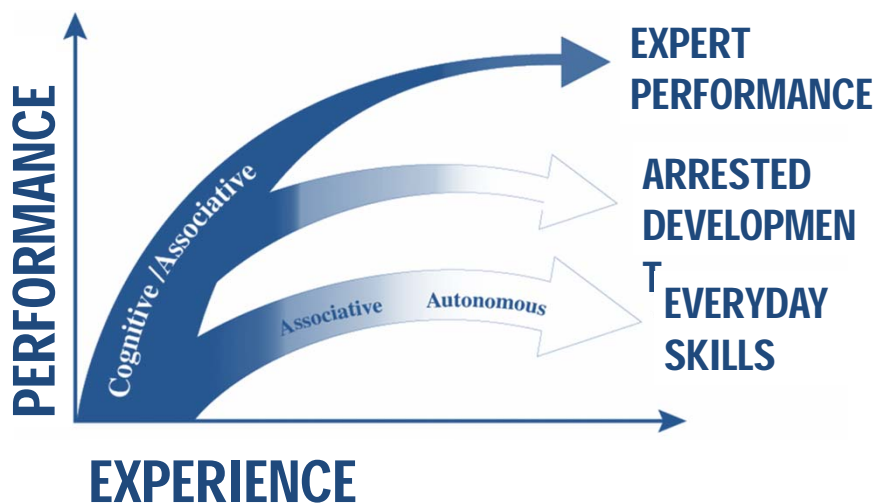
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# WHAT WOULD FURTHER SUPPORT YOUR MASTERY?

- ✓ What can you do to pursue your own mastery?
- ✓ What help do you want and need through collaboration with others?
- ✓ What needs to change at your school to better support growth toward mastery for you and other teachers?



Source: K. A. Ericsson, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2006



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