

Bridging the gap educators and students

Secondary Schools' Conference
Glamorgan Building, Cardiff University
Thursday 29 June 2023

Teens & Teachers Take on Climate Education

Inspired by conversations between young people and educators, Bassaleg School is working in partnership with Tide~ and Cardiff University to provide **a stimulating and liberating space for older students (Y10 & Y12) and teachers to jointly explore climate education provision.**

We aim to involve up to 120 teacher and student delegates from 20 schools.

Our key question is:
How can we recognise and build young people's skills to navigate the multi-dimensional climate emergency?

A **pre-conference activity** and follow-up **autumn event** will support delegates to apply ideas from the conference to their own setting.

Recommendations from this conference will inform practitioners, policy-makers and politicians in Wales and beyond.

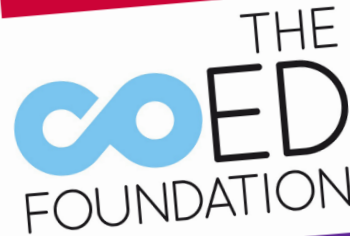
This conference is a pilot for **dialogue events** for young people and their teachers across the UK.

The conference is free, thanks to sponsorship from The Foundation for Compassionate Education (CoEd) and the work of partnership organisations.


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Conference updates -- see [Bassaleg School website](#)

Conference contact - click to email: conference@bassalegschool.com

*Lucy Kirkham, Rhiannon Hawkins, Oliver Lewis & Karina Marwaha
reflect on the process that led to the conference*

On 29th June Cardiff University's Glamorgan Building will be full of young people and their teachers exploring climate education. The story behind this event starts in Bassaleg School, an 11-18 comprehensive on the outskirts of Newport, South Wales.

Revealing the gap

In November 2021, Rhiannon, an ex-Bassaleg student now a geography student at the University of Oxford, was working on a journal series for the Association of Child and Adolescent Mental Health (ACAMH). The focus was the interconnections between mental health and the global ecological crisis. Rhiannon chaired an ACAMH online seminar titled: [Ecological Crisis and the Impact on Mental Health](#) and invited Lucy, her former geography teacher, to attend.

The seminar opened Lucy's eyes. Despite teaching and worrying about climate change for decades, Lucy had not appreciated how young people feel so alone with the threat; how young people's entirely rational concerns are not acknowledged or acted upon; how the climate and ecological emergency is an existential problem that has been seemingly left for young people to solve. Lucy decided to listen more, connect further and highlight the positive actions that are being taken.

Planting the seed

One year later, Lucy hosts an online 'starter conversation' - part of a project looking at the educational implications of climate change run by Tide~ global learning. Inspired by the ACAMH seminar, the conversation focuses on young people's voices. Rhiannon takes part, along with current pupils, Ollie (Year 12) and Karina (Year 10). The input from very articulate students stimulated the conversation. It led to the suggestion of a conference for learners and their teachers to provide:

- ❑ **space for students and teachers to jointly explore climate education;**
- ❑ **a contribution to developing how climate change is seen in schools.**

Growing the conference

Rhiannon and Lucy meet up at Newport Wetlands. They started to discuss the conference, and it takes on a life of its own. Ideas emerge from a shared passion to incorporate alternative perspectives, and

Tide~ Connecting Dialogues
[Climate Change](#)

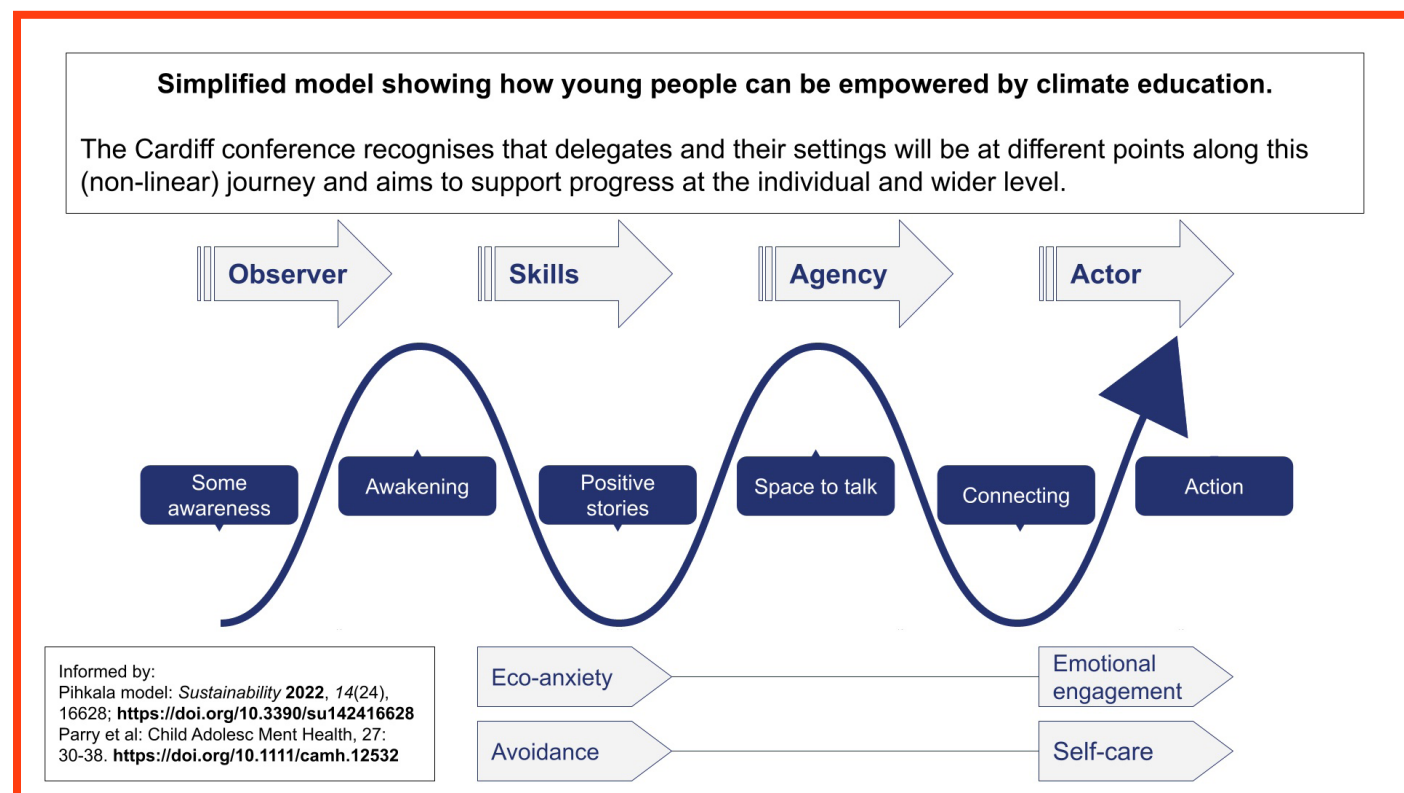


Article from Elephant Times 3.4

provide the space for people to think and speak freely, and critically. The ideas are captured on the only piece of paper to hand - a Tesco receipt!

Back in school Karina and Ollie are positive and they join the conference planning team. Weekly lunchtime meetings are held to discuss ideas, plan conference format and design promotional material. Staff and pupils at Bassaleg lend support. Asher (Year 10) uses the Bassaleg stag in artwork. Rowan (Year 10) works on a diagram to capture the process.

Colleagues help refine ideas and secure sponsorship from the [Compassionate Education Foundation](#). Cardiff University Geography Department offer to host the conference. Approaching suitable speakers has been an adventure.



A journey

To summarise the aims and goals for the conference, we envisage a 'journey' that delegates join when signing up. The journey will help develop pedagogy, gain inspiration for future positive action, and grow mental health resilience.

We seek a conference that will help us all feel:

- less alone; -more informed; - a part of future change.

To support change at the school level, we hope:

- ❑ *people can use what we all learn to develop some new climate education within their school;*
- ❑ *opportunities will shape up for collaboration between schools, within a local area, to create more relevant and inspiring climate education.*

Reflections so far

As we write, schools are replying to conference invitations. An evaluation will be carried out and a post-conference event is planned for the autumn. **For now, we can take stock of what we have gained to this point ...**

Oliver and Karina: During this process, we have been grateful for the opportunities that have been given to us - from being directly involved in the organisation of the conference, to making connections and learning from people in different parts of the country.

We feel it's safe to say that we have gained new and varied skills that will greatly benefit us in the future. As people who are looking to join conservation efforts as a future career, we have found discussing climate change in a new open-minded way, massively helpful in understanding the problem.

Rhiannon: As an individual who has been provided with the opportunities to learn about various pedagogical perspectives surrounding climate change, and attend COP27 negotiations, I see sharing my knowledge and experiences with other young people as extremely important.

This project has taught me that to achieve climate justice collaborating with schools and policymakers is critical to inspire both educators and young people to work together. I feel extremely privileged to be invited to work on a project which has the potential to inspire current and future secondary school students.

Lucy: This whole journey for me started with a revelation when I attended the ACAMH seminar. It continues in that vein. I am excited about what ideas will emerge from the conference. Already I have learnt so much. I have resolved to continue to listen to learners, connect with practitioners and read more widely - **it makes me a better and happier teacher**. I really hope that other teachers and their students will join the journey.

