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PERCEPTUAL EDUCATION IN THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

by

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ABSTRACT

This professional paper examines the philosophy of perceptual education as stated by Dr. Arthur W. Combs, and evaluates the need for perceptual education by the ninth grade students of Lewis and Clark Junior High School in Billings, Montana.

Pertinent literature of the past decade was reviewed. Then the freshman student-body at Lewis and Clark Junior High School was requested to individually identify the favorite classes, least favorite classes, and favorite teachers for the 1974-1975 school year and to list the reasons for the selections. The 480 responses were tabulated and categorized.

Whereas only 37.5% of the population equated their favorite teacher with their favorite class, all of the reasons listed for the selections of a favorite class except one (friends - 2%) were directly effected by the teacher. Of the fifteen reasons listed for preferring one teacher over the rest, more than half the students described him in one of three ways: he (a) had a sense of humor in the classroom, (b) was personable and smiled, and (c) related with the students. Less than 37% of the replies were concerned with the teacher's handling of the subject matter (i.e.: explanation of information, type of assignments, amount of homework, general knowledge, and grades). Over 63% were primarily aware of the teacher's friendly and sincere concern for the individual student both within and outside of the specific classroom.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> I have taught in high school for ten years. During that time I have given assignments among others to a murderer, an evangelist, a pugilist, a thief, and an imbecile. The murderer was a quiet little boy who sat on the front seat and regarded me with pale blue eyes; the evangelist, easily the most popular boy in the school, had the lead in the junior play; the pugilist lounged by the window and let loose at intervals with a raucous laugh that startled even the geraniums; the thief was a gay-hearted Lothario with a song on his lips; and the imbecile, a soft-eyed little animal seeking the shadows.
>
> The murderer awaits death in the state penitentiary; the evangelist has lain a year now in the village churchyard; the pugilist lost an eye in a brawl in Hong Kong; the thief by standing on tiptoe can see the windows of my room from the county jail; the once-gentle-eyed little moron beats his head against a padded cell in the state asylum.
>
> All of these pupils once sat in my room, sat and looked gravely across worn, brown desks. I must have been a great help to these pupils - I taught them the rhyming scheme of the Elizabethan sonnet and how to diagram a complex sentence.
>
> I Taught Them All
> N.J.W.
> The Clearing House
> November 1937

For the past six years the investigator has experienced the joys and traumas of teaching the twelve to fifteen-year age group of junior high school students. Much of that time has been spent up-dating and revising lesson plans in an effort to increase teaching

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competencies, and becoming increasingly aware of a greater responsibility than merely assigning Independence Day projects and explaining the Constitution. He is coming to believe that subject matter is a means, . . . a way, . . . a conveyance, . . . a tool in accomplishing the higher purpose of education today: the student's self-realization and his personal feeling of adequacy.

The problem of this study was to evaluate the need of perceptual education for ninth grade social studies classes at Lewis and Clark Junior High School (Billings, Montana).

In the quest to improve classroom instruction, the researcher delved into the areas of behavioral objectives, individualized programming, and accountability based on student test scores. These efforts to make the subject matter more interesting and meaningful for the students all appeared to concentrate heavily on course content. During this search, a book entitled The Professional Education of Teachers by Arthur W. Combs (1970a) was made available. Therein are listed the following factors which the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Yearbook committee considered to be hindrances to creativity and the atmosphere for growth:

> 1. Preoccupation with order, categorization, and classifying;
> 2. Overvaluing authority, support, evidence, and the "scientific method" - all the good answers are someone else's;

3. Exclusive emphasis upon the historical view, implying that all the good things have been discovered already;
4. Cookbook approaches, filling in the blanks, etc.;
5. Solitary learning, with its discouragement of communication;
6. The elimination of self from the classroom;
7. Emphasis upon force, threat, coercion. What diminishes the self diminishes creativity;
8. The idea that mistakes are sinful;
9. The idea that students are not to be trusted;
10. Lock step organization.

Also included in the text are the committee's suggestions of those factors considered to produce an atmosphere that encourages creativity:

1. The encouragement of fantasy or fun;
2. The provision of wide choices;
3. Trust in students so that they, in turn, can trust themselves;
4. Encouraging cooperative interaction;
5. Creating feelings of belonging;
6. Encouraging cooperation and discouraging competition;
7. Encouraging difference, uniqueness, and integrity;
8. Encouraging communication;
9. Encouraging problem-solving approaches;
10. Valuing openness and flexibility;
11. Valuing individuality;
12. Eliminating censorship
13. Encouraging experimenting and trying.

Further reading tended to refocus the investigator's attention on the students in lieu of the subject matter. The major thesis throughout most of Dr. Combs' writings is that the purpose of education is to give the student a feeling of being adequate, - of being liked, being acceptable, and being capable. This building of a student's

self-concept is meant to be accomplished through positive reaction, reinforcement of good qualities, and trust on the part of the teacher.

The questions dealt with in this study are what aspects of the classroom situation are considered by the individual students to be worthwhile and meaningful, and what qualities apparently allow a teacher to effectively communicate with and relate to those individuals. The information was gathered from the freshman class (about 500 pupils) at Lewis and Clark Junior High School through the use of a short, subjective questionnaire, and the responses were compared with the philosophy of perceptual education as stated by Arthur W. Combs.

Perceptual education, as used in this paper, is an aspect of (and not a sutstitute for) humanistic education. The latter has been somewhat vaguely defined as those educative processes which involve "exploration," "personal effectiveness," "relevancy," etc. Perceptual education involves the particular teacher and the way in which he perceives himself and others. It is dependent upon the perception of others as able, friendly, worthy, and dependable, and upon the perception of self as being with people, dependable, worthy, and wanted. Similarly, the very task of teaching should be perceived as freeing, revealing, and encouraging processes. It is understanding that man's actions depend upon his beliefs.

The junior high school system (grades 7, 8, and 9) is an especially challenging situation, in that it is here the participant usually goes through the human metamorphosis of puberty. While being met with increased responsibilities and demands from family, friends, and acquaintances, the individual often finds himself in less control of his physical faculties. It is a period of increasing stress, but presents a teacher with corresponding opportunities to help. It is the researcher's goal to determine if perceptual education is the most effective way to take advantage of these opportunities.

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to a review of the literature during the past decade on Arthur W. Comb's philosophy of perceptual education (Chapter II); an analysis of the responses received on a questionnaire presented to junior high school freshmen regarding favorite classes and teachers (Chapter III); and the observations and conclusions of the investigator (Chapter IV).

CHAPTER II

PERCEPTUAL EDUCATION

Arthur W. Combs: Spokesman

Arthur W. Combs is possibly the leading spokesman for humanistic and perceptual education in this country today. Dr. Combs entered the field of education after receiving his degrees from Ohio State University in the area of psychology. Before establishing the department of studies for humanistic behavior at the University of Florida in Gainesville (where he is located today), he helped develop the training program in clinical psychology at Syracuse University during his professorship from 1943 until 1954. He is a member of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, and is primarily interested in humanistic and perceptual psychology. He claims that while Donald Snygg was a visiting professor at Syracuse, he was loaned and read a reprint of a 1941 article entitled "The Need for a Phenomenological System of Psychology." Seeing the possibility of applying some ideas to teaching, he approached Dr. Snygg, and together they authored Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Approach to Behavior. (Combs, 1959)

Motivation

It is as a psychologist, then that Dr. Combs has stated the fundamental human need "as a continuous search for personal adequacy." In this sense each of us is always motivated. (1959) Students may not always be motivated in ways that teachers approve of or desire, but they are always motivated in terms of their own basic needs; everyone is motivated to be and become as adequate as he can be in situations as he sees them. (Combs, 1970a) When students appear to be unmotivated, it is because teachers do not understand the students' goals. A student's refusal to accept those values held dear by teachers does not indicate a lack of motivation, but rather that the student does not identify them with his immediate quest for self-enhancement. Threatening to use failing grades at this point may increase interest, but only to the extent necessary to maintain a concept-of-self by getting by. (Combs, 1959) As for competition, psychologists say that only those who think they can win are motivated; those who do not think they can win are discouraged and disillusioned; and when competition becomes too important, morality breaks down. Knowledge of this innate drive changes the structure of the educational process from what was traditionally felt essential. If students truly are motivated to become as adequate as possible, then they are seeking the same

goals for themselves that teachers ought to be seeking for them. (Combs, 1970a)

Learning

Freud once said that no one does anything unless they attach importance to it. The challenge to the teacher, therefore, is to make learning important. The processes of education today seem to be concerned with non-human questions. Learning itself is a very human process whereby teachers must not only give the student information but must give that information meaning. (Combs, 1973)

The process must start from a foundation of security and acceptance. Emphasis is not placed on the concern "to teach," - but rather "to help." It is the process of becoming a teacher (like a doctor, lawyer, minister, or like profession). The successful practice of these occupations depends upon how much help or service can be afforded to one's fellow man, not how much can be bestowed upon them. (Combs, 1972)

In essence, helping is a learning process. When helping is successful, the student has learned a new and better relationship between himself and the world in which he lives. Similarly, unsuccessful attempts to help may result in a poorer, less effective way of dealing with his personal environment. Regardless of what happens, the person being aided learns something from the experience (even

if it is no more than the idea that the helper is not much help to him). (Combs, 1971b)

A unique quality about the helping professions (especially teachers) is a dependency upon momentary and instantaneous response from the helper. Like a computer, the feed-back to the student depends upon the programming of the teacher. His self-perception and personal beliefs determine the response he will give. Accordingly, he must feel himself to be sufficient and successful, or he will not seek higher order needs for his students. (Combs, 1972) Accomplishments as a teacher, therefore, will depend upon whether he believes it his purpose to mold children in the proper direction or to help them grow. The basic approach of the helper is directed at people more than things; he is more aware of the human, rather than of rules, objects, events, et cetera. (Combs, 1971b)

Learning has two aspects: (1) the acquisition of knowledge or experience, and (2) the discovery of its meaning and application. Knowledge, itself, cannot guarantee successful professional application. First, it must be so personally meaningful that it is accepted as belief. As Combs points out, most teachers know that the students in their classrooms are distinct individuals and differ greatly from one another, but unless this fact assumes a significant position in their beliefs, they will continue to teach as if the information

did not even exist. (1971b) Facts are only something that someone believes in. (1972)

Obviously beliefs are a major determinant of what and how people attempt to teach and of how well they succeed in their purpose. Curriculum methods depend upon what teachers believe about the nature of the individuals entrusted to their care. (Combs, 1958) Accordingly, the very behavior and attitudes of teachers towards others depends upon what they believe about them. (Combs, 1971a)

When a teacher ignores or criticizes a student's enthusiastic remarks about some topic of interest, in order to get back to "what the book says," his action has the same effect as telling the student that school is a place where he studies things that don't matter. Students must find meaning in the information if there is to be any hope of them retaining it; otherwise "learning" becomes a matter of rote memorization. (Combs, 1973)

Failure

It has often been said that if a child does not fail at school, he will not know how to cope with failure in the future. Unfortunately, exactly the opposite is true. If a child is taught failure, he will learn to accept it with less and less reluctance until he finally accepts it as his own. But if a child is instilled with the sense of confidence which can only be taught by success,

he will rise above failure and try again. The positive view which allows one to be creative, individual, original, and spontaneous is born of success, not defeat![1] It is only with that positive view that one can afford to be generous, and to give of one's self. Only success can replace the need to be afraid of the new and different. (Combs, 1962)

Behavior

Learning is usually measured by what people know, whereas the real significance lies with the resulting changes in behavior. (Combs, 1961) Behavior is a personal thing. It is the function of perception and is evidenced in terms of what the student thinks is so. The ideas which most affect behavior are those the individual has about himself. Knowledge is not enough; individuals know more than they exhibit in their behavior. For example, most people know the importance of a balanced diet, but unless that has special personal meaning, they still indulge in junk food; most teachers know better than to lose their temper or to be sarcastic but it still happens. (Combs, 1958)

---

[1]An interesting survey of successful Americans was once conducted by Dr. Harold C. Lyon, head of the federal government's Office of Gifted and Talented Children. In an attempt to determine what factors contributed to success, it was noted that during the childhood of every participant some adult had stepped out of his formal role (such as a teacher), and had related to the child as a friend. (Hey, 1975)

It is impossible to teach the "right" ways to behave. Behavior is a symptom; it is the product of the meaning of what is learned. (Combs, 1972) The behavior of students is subject to those limits the student places upon himself. The teacher has the unparalleled opportunity to help the child see himself as not being too short, or awkward, or unattractive. The teacher can provide opportunity for the child to express himself in public and to have contact with his peers. Schools should help fulfill psychological needs as well. Teachers can help give satisfaction and direction. Discipline problems show a need on the part of the students. Doctors and lawyers do not send their clients home telling them to return when their problems are resolved. (Combs, 1971a) Good teaching, too, is based on the medical concept that an "organism's own resources can be counted upon to move it towards health." (Combs, 1974b) If teachers want to be considered members of the "professional" groups, they have responsibilities to meet.

A student's self-concept depends heavily upon the reactions of teachers (and others) towards him. A child can only see himself as being adequate (as being liked, acceptable, and able) if other people treat him like he is adequate. A teacher can present the student with either a threat or a challenge. If he presents a threat, the child will learn little of significance for it is human nature to pay most attention to the source of the threat and to

possible escape from the situation. Threats force people to defend their existing theory. A challenge, however, presents a problem of interest with a distinct chance for the student to succeed. It is rather widely accepted that even general intelligence (as measured by I.Q. examinations) can be created and increased by the environment of a child. Human capacities have the option to increase or to atrophy, depending upon the opportunity the individual is afforded to exercise them. It becomes a teacher's duty to help the student find as many ways as possible to reinforce his good qualities and to see himself in a positive way. Fritz Redl once remarked that there was not much difference between a good child and a naughty child but that there was a world of difference between a naughty child and a real tough delinquent. His question was how to keep them naughty. (Combs, 1971a) Respect and caring and responsibility are learned. Speaking negatively, the denial of human rights "leads to violence and revolt or apathy and despair, depending upon how adequate students feel to beat the system." (Combs, 1974b) Responsibility is not the cause of behavior but a product of experience. It involves the perceptions of self-confidence (to drop defenses, and accept larger values over immediate needs), and identification or oneness with other people. (Combs, 1974b)

Teachers cannot make changes in behavior directly. They can only serve as agents or catalysts in the process of change.

(Combs, 1959) The helping process is an experience in problem solving. The teacher does not have to be a social worker or psychologist to realize that it is how the student feels at the moment that counts. Granted, some of his limits may be the result of many years affliction, but now is the time to start giving the child what he needs. (Combs, 1958) "Every good experience a person is given is given him forever." It may take lots of positive effort to make a noticeable difference but all of it counts. Teachers must not become discouraged. It could be that the individual being helped does not improve; but if he stops a down-hill trend, the teacher has made great progress. (Combs, 1971a)

Relationships

The task of teaching is the creation of situations conducive to the effective exploration and discovery of personal meaning. In the carrying out of this task, the teacher may call upon a vast number of teaching aids, but in the final analysis there is no substitution for his own personality, which serves as the medium through which all he does is expressed. The efficient production of learning experiences for others depends upon the skill of the teacher in using his personality as an instrument for helping others learn. (Combs, 1959)

> The role of the helper is essentially one of ministering to people. It does not seek to direct or control its subjects, but to serve the organism and to create the

> conditions most likely to set it free. It is a matter of manipulation of processes rather than of people. It is a question of aiding, helping, facilitating, encouraging, and assisting rather than forcing, coercing, cajoling, bribing, or exhorting persons to better things. It is a matter of working with the organism rather than against it, of seeing helper and helpee as team mates rather than antagonists.
>
> Helpers perceive others as having the capacity to deal with their problems.
>
> Helpers perceive others as being friendly and enhancing.
>
> Helpers perceive others as being of worth rather than unworthy.
>
> Helpers perceive others as essentially developing from within rather than as a product of external events to be molded and directed.
>
> Helpers perceive others as essentially trustworthy and dependable in the sense of behaving in lawful ways.
>
> Helpers perceive others as being potentially fulfilling and enhancing to self rather than impeding or threatening.
>
> Helpers feel basically adequate rather than inadequate.
>
> Helpers feel trustworthy rather than untrustworthy.
>
> Helpers see themselves as wanted rather than unwanted.
>
> Helpers see themselves as worthy rather than unworthy.
>
> Helpers perceive their purpose as one of freeing rather than of controlling people.
>
> Helpers tend to be more concerned with larger rather than smaller issues.
>
> Helpers are more likely to be self-revealing than self-concealing.
>
> Helpers tend to be personally involved with rather than alienated from the people they work with.
>
> Helpers are concerned with furthering processes rather than achieving goals. (Combs, 1971b)

There is no one way of creating relationships with students. As a matter of fact, the variety of relationships teachers have with their students are as diverse as human personality itself. Good teaching may occur whether the teacher is gentle or tough, lenient or strict, reserved or out-going. From all appearances,

there is no specific personality which all teachers should have. To the contrary, effective teaching seems to be a matter of constructively employing the teacher's unique personality. There will be as many methods of teaching as there are teachers. (Combs, 1959)

A conference on humanistic education determined that it is sensitivity and creativity which count in the classroom, . . . not a bag of tricks, but what emerges from the situation. Any variety of strategies and techniques is relatively unnecessary when the student is engaged in the subject, and when he sincerely wants to learn. Indeed, excessive methodology may tend to make the student dependent upon the teacher for the positive experiences they may provide, defeating their purpose if the student has not been able to personalize the ways of discovering meaningful experiences in his own life. Perceptual education is dependent upon teachers who have a trust in their individual ability to find what they need; who understand and accept the relationship between knowers and knowledge; and who have a skill at helping others to learn what life calls for. (Bridges, 1973)

Investigative Research

The only available documented research pertaining directly to teachers and perceptual education was conducted by a student of Dr. Combs named C. Thomas Gooding. Twenty perceptual hypotheses were investigated in this study:

A. Perceptions of people and their behavior
   1. Able - Unable
   2. Friendly - Unfriendly
   3. Worthy - Unworthy
   4. Internally motivated - Externally motivated
   5. Dependable - Undependable
   6. Helpful - Hindering

B. Perceptions of self
   7. With people - Apart from people
   8. Able - Unable
   9. Dependable - Undependable
   10. Worthy - Unworthy
   11. Wanted - Unwanted

C. Perception of the teaching task
   12. Freeing - Controlling
   13. Larger - Smaller
   14. Revealing - Concealing
   15. Involved - Uninvolved
   16. Encouraging process - Achieving goals

D. General frame of reference
   17. Internal - External
   18. People - Things
   19. Perceptual meanings - Facts and events
   20. Immediate causation - Historical

The principals and curriculum coordinators from district elementary schools were asked to submit a list of the most and least effective teachers in their buildings. The agreement on nominations between the two groups was 52.5%, and only persons whose names appeared on both lists were selected. Only women were used in the experiment, and tests were run to ensure that no significant differences existed between means of the two groups on age, experience in the county system, total years of teaching experience, National Teacher Examination scores, and academic training. (All members held at least a bachelor's degree, and five of the members of the effective and one member of the ineffective group held master's degrees.)

Of seventy-seven prospective subjects requested to participate in a "study of effective teaching," only 51.3 per cent of the effective group (nineteen teachers) and 38.2 per cent of the ineffective group (thirteen teachers) accepted. None of the participants had knowledge of how they were classified.

Four observers were carefully chosen and were given special training over a one month period to make perceptual inferences based on classroom observation and personal interviews. The reliability based on the percentage of agreement of inferences ranged from 82.7 per cent from observation to 74.8 per cent from interviews, with an overall reliability of 80.5 per cent. The ratings were made on a perception score sheet which described each of the twenty hypotheses on a seven point scale (i.e.: highly able = 1, highly unable = 7). The data from the inferences on observation yielded results which were significant at better than the .01 level of confidence. Whereas the data from inferences on interviews did not yield significant results, it did reveal trends which were in the same direction as the observation inferences.

The conclusions of the study were that there is a strong relationship between the perceptual organization of the teacher and his effectiveness as a professional worker and that effective and ineffective teachers have characteristically different

perceptual organizations in terms of the twenty hypotheses tested. The significance of these findings was considered to be increased by the general failure of objective approaches to the question of good and poor teaching. (Gooding, 1969)

CHAPTER III

QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESPONSE ANALYSIS

During the final two weeks of the 1974-1975 school year, the freshman class of Lewis and Clark Junior High School (Billings, Montana) was asked to answer four subjective questions:

1. a) What is your favorite class this year? and
   b) What is the main reason you so enjoyed this particular class?
2. a) Which class this year would you consider to be your least favorite? and
   b) What is the main reason you rank it so low?
3. Without mentioning any names, what is it that you most like about your favorite teacher this year?
4. Does your favorite teacher teach your favorite class?

Fellow colleagues in the social studies department cooperated by allowing the researcher to take the first part of each class to present the questions to those students present and to collect the responses. All classes were covered in a two-day period and exactly 480 answer sheets were collected.

The investigator found it noteworthy that of the total replies received only 180 expressed that their favorite teacher taught their favorite class. Indeed, one student said, "Definitely

not, I intensely dislike my English teacher, but I like the class because I like to write." Another slightly less adamant remark was, "I enjoy speech even if I don't get along with the teacher."

Every single subject offered at Lewis and Clark was listed by at least one of those 480 as being the favorite class out of a seven-period day. Likewise, every one of those same classes was again listed by some other student as being the least favorite portion of the school day. (The subjects listed, the numbers listing them, and the reasons given for so listing are located in Appendix A, page 34.)

The reasons given by the freshmen for selecting their favorite class break down into eight (8) general categories:

1. Enjoy and understand the subject matter (30%);
2. Subject is especially interesting, easy, and/or fun (26%);
3. Like the teacher (15%);
4. There is a lot of class freedom, little pressure (11%);
5. Subject is a challenge and/or "applicable" (8.5%);
6. There is very little or no work outside class (4%);
7. High grades are received in this class (3.5%);
8. There are many friends in the class (2%).

Similarly, there are seven (7) general categories, or reasons, subjects were disliked:

1. The teacher is disliked or considered unfair (23%);
2. The class is considered uninteresting, unchallenging, unapplicable to life, busywork, and/or a bore (22%);
3. The teacher goes too fast, and/or the subject is not understood (18%);
4. Subject is very difficult (14%);
5. Subject and subject matter are disliked (13.5%);
6. There are too many assignments and tests (6.5%);
7. The grading system is disliked (3%).

The responsibility placed on the teacher by these students is both evident and overwhelming! And each category assumes greater meaning when compared with the qualities listed by the students as being expressed by favorite teachers:

a. Has a sense of humor, can take a joke, not a grouch, uses humor in the classroom (25%).

The importance attributed to this quality by more than one-out-of-every-four freshmen was emphasized in their additional remarks. Joking around "doesn't make a class that is already boring more boring." The students liked it when teachers told jokes "and stories of younger years. He does this when he knows the kids are bored so when he does this it brings our interest around and then we learn things." It is not entertainment the students are seeking. A little humor adds "liveliness to the class so you don't get bored.

You can't learn if you're bored." Students say their favorite teacher "is funny, fun to be with, and I've learned a lot in his class." One even went so far as to comment, "he keeps you enjoyably alive." What an observation . . . that a teacher should have so much potential as to be capable of actually keeping another person "enjoyably alive"!

b. A "good guy," "nice," "cool," warm," fun to be around, smiles, not up-tight (17%).

One student's comment was as much a challenge as a statement: The teacher "is not afraid to be nice." It is a sincere quality the students appreciate; someone who is "nice and friendly but he doesn't pretend to be with it." The students were not trying to avoid discipline, but noted that the teacher "doesn't yell only [except] when it's for our own good." The students know the difference between discipline and regimentation. "He tries to be grouchy like a lion, but I know he's just a teddy bear inside and it makes me smile." Indeed, smiling holds a high place on the scales of many. "All my favorite teachers have a nice smile that keeps the class in good spirits while they learn. Even teachers I have never had I like because they smile a lot (and smiling people make good first impressions)."

c. Relates well, respects the students, treats them with trust . . . like equals, sincere, loyal, and interested in the individual (17%).

There is no way to hide whether or not a teacher "understands and likes the kids." How do the freshmen read the teachers' general conception of "students"? Apparently not very positively, . . . because the favorite teacher was notably described as thinking "of all the people in his class as friends, not just students." They were very aware that he "treats me like a peer instead of someone or something inferior." Students want "a person-to-person relationship, not student to teacher." "He talked to me like I was a person; he took interest in my school work." "He's not like a teacher but more like a friend."

d. Helps, explains well, encourages (10%).

The real importance of this category lies in conjunction with the remarks relating understanding of a subject to liking or disliking it. Students did not like the teacher who "covered the material at his level not ours." Understanding a subject was almost equated with enjoying it by a third of the group, while not-understanding the subject was the third most commonly mentioned complaint for disliking a class. "Sinks no sents [sic] in it" was the reason one person disliked English. A teacher's intent on covering the book, rather than meeting the needs of the students, was especially

listed as the negative trait of algebra, geometry, and foreign langauge teachers, - classes which build on previously mastered material, and which are usually characterized by "honors" students. One teacher was labeled "a speed freak, - his only concern is speed, speed, speed." Confidence cannot be built where people do not understand and know what is expected of them.

e. An understanding person who helps with out-of-class problems; someone who cares (7.5%).

The students made it evident that they respected and appreciated teachers who were "interested in how I was doing in other subjects besides the one he teaches." It's a high compliment when a member of the class says, "He's taught me a lot about life, not just school."

f. Makes class interesting and fun by changing routine and incorporating fun projects (7.5%).

Whereas the teacher is preferred who "varies the routine and finds interesting things for us to do," the students were not trying to get out of anything. They expressed a desire for a teacher who is "fun, but makes us work." The comment, "He gives us activities to work on" indicates that the students are not trying to avoid work, but are seeking work which they enjoy and find meaningful.

g. Allows some class freedom and keeps a relaxed atmosphere (7%).

Students like responsibility. They do not think school should be compared with "boot camp." Whereas no one mentioned strictness as being desirable (and several objected to it), many students voiced their approval of "control" (see below).

h. Maintains control of the class and the discussion so the students learn a lot (6.5%).

These young people do not want to have their time wasted by anyone, - not by the teacher, and not by their fellow classmates. They expressed a desire for a teacher who "isn't strict on discipline, but he makes sure we learn what we are supposed to learn."

i. Assigns little written work, expecially homework (4%).

Several classes were extremely disliked because the students felt they were being given excessive "busywork." They were intent on learning something, not on killing time, - and many felt that was possible with minimal written assignments. "The teacher did give homework, but not every dam [sic] day." They were very aware of those instances where "you don't work that much and you learn a lot." In other words, the teacher "doesn't make work."

j. Patient and does not lose temper easily (4%).

Anxiety on the part of the teacher apparently does not correlate positively with the amount of learning that takes place.

Some teachers stand out to students simply because "he never bitches," and "he doesn't get on my case."

k. Teaches well, and has good command of the subject matter (3%).

It would be a sad comment if this would make one teacher stand out from the rest, but it is nice to be appreciated for one's abilities.

l. Impartial and fair, with no obvious favorites (2%).

Having favorite students is a luxury teachers cannot afford to express.

m. Grades easily (1.5%).

This minority category could be easily dismissed were it not for the explanation of one student that he liked a class because "it's not hard and I passed it," and another student's preference "because it's the only class I'm going to pass this year." Several subjects (conspicuously English) were disliked "because I never passed it." Is failure something they are achieving entirely on their own, or is it something they are being taught? Teachers have a responsibility to ensure that the students understand the grading system and to use grades constructively. If grades do not help the students, they are not accomplishing their primary function.

n. No specific reason, just the teacher himself (1.5%).

There is nothing wrong with someone being favored just "because he is a good teacher."

o. Lets us get away with things (i.e.: going to the store during school hours, sleeping in class, smoking or chewing gum) (.5%).

The opinions of one art and three shop students out of a student population of 480 do not mar the recorded reasons of the rest. Teachers have something very positive to give to students, and a majority of them are doing so.

Nevertheless, several of the replies merit everyone's concern. One response listed "No favorite subject"; "Everything" for least favorite subject; "Nothing" for what was most liked about a favorite teacher. Another explained that he had "no favorite subjects anymore. Teachers make it funless." And finally, there was the very sobering plaint against a teacher "'cause he says he don't like us and he says he don't care." It is the moral and ethical duty of all members of the helping professions to conscientiously guard against this attitude, and to reaffirm their responsibilities and commitment. Only by so doing can teaching command and resume its due respect within our communities and fulfill its objectives.

CHAPTER IV

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Testing and measurement of results become difficult whenever objectivity gives way to subjectivity. Nevertheless it appears from the responses to the questionnaire that students not only like but actually have a need for perceptual education in their schooling.

In the "1975 Report on Basic Quality Education," Montana's Board of Public Education defined a basic quality education as "a process which can enable students to transform their potential into actuality." The Board also listed eight important inter-related dimensions. To help students transform their potential,

> . . . schooling should enable them
> To learn who they are becoming
> To find joy in learning
> To communicate ideas, knowledge, thoughts, and feelings
> To reason critically and creatively
> To assume social responsibility
> To further their creative ability
> To be effective in a changing world
> To develop personal responsibility
>
> (Teachers' Resource Guide)

If the purpose of education is to set conditions that will allow a person to become the greatest human being possible, schooling must begin to decrease its emphasis upon subject matter and become more value-oriented. Schools must be for students, not administrators, counselors, and record keeping. Classrooms must meet the needs of

the pupils, not be oriented towards teachers and "parents' night." The curriculum should be created around and for the personal growth of the individual. Involving the student more in the curriculum would also have a substantial effect on the oft-alluded-to area of "motivation." Remembering the moral of The Saber-Toothed Curriculum, teachers should beware that they cover material that is meaningful to the student. It should no longer suffice that there merely be "cultural value." Grades must stop being used to categorize and to discipline and should decrease classroom anxiety by becoming less punitive and increasingly meaningful to the individual.

The uniqueness of each student should be respected and emphasized. Respect for personal uniqueness should be made obvious by spoken and unspoken acceptance. Only in this type of atmosphere can personal freedom and real learning take place. Teachers must constantly strive to hold a high opinion of students in order to have students hold a high opinion of themselves.

The teacher who lives up to his role as a professional sees his students as able, worthy, friendly individuals, . . . and they respond to him. Like any other human being, adolescents need a confidant with whom they can share their problems and discuss their worries. Time and time again it has been the affective teachers who were selected to fulfill this role in human relations. The

importance of this function in developing adequate citizens for our communities is inestimable!

Perceptual education has even shown itself capable of reducing school rebellion and vandalism, a national problem costing taxpayers half-a-billion dollars annually (see Appendix B, page 37). The sincere expression of love and concern is proving to be superior to police patrols, alarm systems, and attack dogs.

There is no one set of traits or methods which will automatically make a successful teacher. It is up to the individual teacher to assess his own personality and to adjust his methods accordingly. It is also up to him to understand that subject matter is not the key to successful education. If teachers ever hope to build confidence in and respect for their claimed profession, it will only be done by proving that it is, truly, a "helping" profession. Teaching must mean that the individual student is all important.

A student wrote about a favorite teacher:

> he doesn't give much homework
> he really teaches well, I learn a lot
> he's very leanient [sic] and doesn't mind a joke
> he comes in every morning, so if you need help, he's there
> he's nice and smiles a lot

It's a description of affective, humanistic, perceptual education. It involves teachers perceiving their students as capable and trustworthy and worthwhile. It's an incessant, Herculean task, and it's something to strive for!

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

REASONS SUBJECTS WERE ENJOYED

A - Enjoy and understand the subject matter
B - Subject is especially interesting, easy, and/or fun
C - Like the teacher
D - There is a lot of class freedom, little pressure
E - Subject is a challenge and/or applicable
F - There is very little or no work outside class
G - High grades are received in this class
H - There are many friends in the class

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Algebra	6	11	4	-	6	-	5	1
Art	16	12	8	12	7	2	2	-
Audio-visual Asst.	-	2	1	1	-	-	3	-
Band	6	3	2	-	-	2	-	1
Biology	10	3	-	-	-	-	-	1
Chorus	24	13	6	3	1	2	-	2
English	10	8	8	1	1	-	2	-
French	6	7	1	-	1	-	-	-
Geometry	1	3	-	-	1	-	-	-
Gym	9	2	-	6	-	2	-	1
Home Economics	1	6	-	2	-	-	1	1
Latin	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-
Library Asst	-	1	-	-	-	2	-	-
Mathematics	3	5	1	-	-	-	1	-
Mechanical Drawing	8	2	2	4	2	1	-	-
Orchestra	3	-	-	-	3	-	-	1
Newspaper Staff	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Science	4	7	5	3	6	-	-	1
Shop	18	8	1	14	7	4	1	-
Social Studies	17	25	24	6	5	4	2	-
Spanish	2	3	3	-	2	-	1	1
Speech	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Totals	149	122	67	52	42	20	18	12

REASONS CLASSES WERE DISLIKED

A - The teacher is disliked or considered unfair
B - The class is considered uninteresting, unchallenging, unapplicable to life, busywork, and/or a bore
C - The teacher goes too fast, and/or the subject is not understood
D - Subject is very difficult
E - Subject and subject matter are disliked
F - There are too many assignments and tests
G - The grading system is disliked

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Albegra	13	6	27	24	5	3	4
Art	4	-	-	3	3	-	-
Audio-visual Asst	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Band	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Biology	6	2	2	-	1	-	1
Chorus	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
English	52	41	18	12	22	18	4
French	1	-	-	1	1	-	1
Geometry	3	1	3	4	-	-	1
Gym	1	2	-	2	6	-	1
Home Economics	3	2	-	-	-	-	-
Latin	-	-	2	1	-	-	-
Library Asst	2	1	-	-	-	-	-
Mathematics	4	4	3	8	7	4	-
Mechanical Drawing	-	1	1	-	-	-	-
Orchestra	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Newspaper staff	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Science	16	29	20	5	13	2	1
Shop	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Social Studies	2	11	4	-	5	3	-
Spanish	-	5	3	6	-	1	-
Speech	4	-	-	1	1	-	-
Totals	114	105	83	68	64	31	13

NOTE: One detail of this survey should be explained to the critical reader. Appendix A indicates a considerably favorable response towards Social Studies which might be misconstrued as reflecting upon the class period in which the questionnaire was taken. In the Billings school district, social studies is comprised of one semester consumer education and one semester called "Teenagers and Contemporary Life" and is required of all ninth graders. The program is specially constructed to cover those aspects of community life which directly pertain to the individual (i.e.: what to look for in buying a used car, how to get a refund on faulty merchandise, what happens when a juvenile is arrested, etc.). The curriculum was prepared by present members of the faculty, and after five years of increasing success it is still unhampered by a prescribed text-book. At Lewis and Clark Junior High School, it is one of the only classes characterized by out-of-the-building excursions (comparing prices at grocery stores, changing tires and inspecting engines on faculty automobiles, etc.) and a variety of guest speakers (advertising agents, insurance representatives, etc.). It is well received by the faculty, the students, the parents, and the local merchants and business community.

APPENDIX B

PERCEPTUAL EDUCATION AND VANDALISM

"How One School Turned Off Vandalism" by Robert P. Hey, staff correspondent, The Christian Science Monitor, May 19, 1975.

> Five years ago vandals broke into the Riverdale [Maryland] Elementary School half a dozen times during the school year, and broke school windows almost every weekend.
>
> Now the level of vandalism here is near zero. Window panes remain whole and the break-ins have ended. "It's as if an invisible moat surrounds the school," says principal Herman Schiemer. Additionally, there is little in-school violence - although some 500 pupils come from the neighborhood - white, ethnic, low-income, low-adult educational level, and the remaining 200 are bused from nearby Seat Pleasant - all black and low income.
>
> Riverdale's success flouts the national trend. The nationwide cost of vandalism and violence is estimated at $500 million annually, according to a special study of the Senate juvenile delinquency subcommittee. Public opinion polls in some communities show parents consider discipline, school violence, and vandalism as their schools' top problems.
>
> From now through October the Senate subcommittee is probing this whole issue. One thing Indiana's Sen. Birch Bayh, subcommittee chairman, wants to learn is whether strict discipline -- classroom repression and school expulsion -- helps solve the problem -- or makes it worse.
>
> Only two suspended
>
> Riverdale's approach was a blend of reasoning, individual attention, and human love, says Mr. Schiemer. Only as a last resort is discipline used. Since taking over five years ago "I've only suspended two kids," he says.
>
> Subcommittee investigators tentatively think harsh discipline counterproductive. They are looking for success stories from schools using other means.
>
> When he has had to be stern with a pupil Mr. Schiemer makes a point to seek him out at least once later in the

day to speak kindly to him -- so that the child understands he is loved although his actions have been disapproved of.

Coupled with the school's reaching out to parents and community, this approach gives pupils such a good feeling about the school that they protect rather than vandalize it. Kindness, in addition, also unlocks the doors of learning for many youngsters.

At the core of the Schiemer approach, is the necessity of building one-to-one relationships between a teacher and every child in his class. It takes a long while and with some children must be done outside the classroom: "I tell my teachers," Mr. Schiemer says, "that most children you can 'reach' at school -- but some you never can. You have to get to know them outside school."

Thus teachers take a pupil or two to lunch, to a movie, to sleep overnight at their homes, or for the weekend. One young teacher took all the boys in her class to a movie; then invited all the girls to sleep overnight. "They slept up on the third floor; her husband came up and told ghost stories, and they had a great time."

Other educators in the area laud the dedication of the school's faculty.

Success secret hunted

Dr. Harold C. Lyon, head of the federal government's Office of Gifted and Talented Children, once surveyed successful Americans to see if it could be determined what factors contributed to their success. One thread ran throughout, he found: in every person's case, during childhood some adult had stepped out of his formal role, as teacher for example, and had known and related to the child as a friend. This special attention, Dr. Lyon believes, is a key to successful teaching.

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