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Editor's Corner - Quality Teachers = Quality Pupils

James J. Hungerford
Marshalltown Senior High School

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Quality Teachers = Quality Pupils

Effective teaching has always been a difficult task. But a hard job done well has always been satisfying regardless of one's management style. Management and evaluation styles may change, but effective teaching has always been proven by having all of the students doing high-quality work.

Teachers are being told to standardize their teaching, to write objectives and activities. Are we to assume they never had any before? Or that this practice will help teachers carry them out and become more effective? As teachers attempt to comply, education is being fragmented, dissected, cataloged, mystified, unitized and perhaps sanitized, too. Content areas that might be controversial, or simply interesting, may be omitted from the curriculum.

More and more often, teachers are being addressed as unknowing and nonintellectual beings, certainly less-than-capable professionals. Centralized curriculum, centralized standardized tests and standardized teacher behaviors frustrate teachers who have shown students what education should be about. Competent instructors recognize that the effort to stuff students with measurable fragments of knowledge has little to do with high-quality, long term education. Yet, their concerns have been ignored or deprecated by politically motivated state or national standardizers. It is difficult to give up what you believe because you are being evaluated on the current fashion or buzzword philosophy.

Any method of teaching that is imposed from above without concern for the needs of teachers and students is bound to fail. Research data has shown this; yet thousands of dollars have been spent on currently fashionable programs. In the past, teachers have had the good sense to pick and choose. Now, teachers are being asked to accept class loads and working conditions that practically ensure failure.

Of course, there are those--usually non-classroom personnel--who maintain it doesn't make any difference how many students are in a class. However, the position papers on the negative effects of large science class size (Science Teachers of Missouri) will, hopefully, change a few minds.

If teachers teach the way they are told, emphasize trivial facts and right answers of low quality, avoid controversy and discussion, tailor what they teach to the state testing programs and fall in line, they will be praised as successful team players and the students blamed as incompetents.

Able teachers who want to teach conceptually and challenge students to think find themselves in a catch-22. Some are giving up what they believe.

All teachers need "time to teach," the tools to lead and lots of encouragement. Given these, quality will grow in them and their students. Glasser (1990) states, "The more that the work which students are asked to do satisfies their needs, the harder they will work."

There seems to be a fear in education, especially among the measurers and fragmenters, that high quality inevitably means low quantity, i.e. covering less ground. However, research shows the opposite occurs. Quality always leads to increased productivity and more material covered (Glasser, 1990).

If the leader in the classroom does and expects quality work, and if emphasis is placed on quality work in a cooperative atmosphere, we don't need everyone to do the job the same way. Diversity is the American way.

James J. Hungerford
Teacher Resource Specialist
Department of Science Education
Marshalltown Senior High School
Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

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