

The Importance of People

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This month's column is the contribution of Helen Schabbel, teacher in the Tappan Junior High School at Ann Arbor, Michigan. Miss Schabbel reflects, in verse, on the human relationships that concern teachers everywhere. Beneath the "light touch," however, one discovers a sensitivity to the trials and tribulations of teachers and of young people—a sensitivity that gives even the light touch a depth not often found in this kind of writing.

Do You?

Feelings
like hairs
are multiple
they are mirrored
in the voice and its pitch
along the hairline of the head
in the twisted posture of the spine
in the angle of the knees
on the soles of worn shoes
in the clutch of a fist
in the moisture on the palm
in the color of the skin
in the tilt of the head
in the brightness of the eye
in the tone of the body
by the texture and color of clothing

Each is an instrument
tuned to one body
which plays its part in a greater symphony
all tuned to one unit
a class
reaching and twisting
and growing
together or apart
depending
on
understandings
developing or shrinking
because

a teacher
sees or fails to see
feelings

Snarls

When a group
is learning to operate
democratically
at eighth grade level
it seems to me
the greatest hazard
to their success
lies at a crucial point
when they are suggesting
a variety of ideas
to consider and think about

If they can hear
each others suggestions
without
name calling, pooh poohing
groaning gasping
facial grimaces
list them in the order presented
comment
objectively
on their worth or lack of worth
and then
vote in
what will provide opportunity

for the greatest number
the feeling of cohesiveness
warmth and group responsibility
cements them firmly to each other

It is an experience
about which they radiate
a healthy glow
no words need be spoken
on something as simple as
you seem to have chosen
with so much intelligence
and good understanding
for each other

They have bridged a gap
and developed a bond of faith
stronger than nylon
tougher than steel
it will need reinforcing
because even a new article of clothing
cannot delegate itself to the background
of a personality
until time
has
softened
and rearranged
its lines

If a teacher does not
or cannot
help the group
to pass this simple test
each succeeding failure
so snarls the thread of understanding
that growing humans will seem
forever doomed to failure
about the artistry
of human relations

Found a Lost Backbone

There are boys
who gravitate
sometimes toward the teacher
sometimes toward nuisance elements
in a classroom
they seem so spineless
more like jelly fish
give them permissive atmosphere
and the worst

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in them
takes over
at least it seems that way
to the teacher
in a democratic classroom

Charles is such a person
he is quiet and plain
hard to distinguish in a group
with voice so soft
it ought to be a girls
he likes to tuck his head
into the huddle
to hear whats going on
he likes to see what boys are doing
when theyre not listening
in class
he goes into committee
with those who have
short attention spans

Today his committee reported
they all came through
except one
Charles had the best report of all
he knew his material

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he exerted himself
about the facts
he went to the board
and selected several maps
to help portray
our countrys growth
he answered questions
with confidence
he had discovered
many details
to share with us
he loved doing it
for us
his face became alert
his eyes so full of interest
his classmates responded well
to his knowledge
and that soft voice
could be heard
I their teacher
couldnt do it that way
but thats
our individual differences
we still
both got through
to others
Charles is on the way
to self discipline
and more self confidence
he grows with each experience
it wont be long
before
he will be forgetting
his little boys self
and assuming
the responsibilities
that are his
have been his
and he didnt know it
until he
felt it
surge through his being
and
he experienced
a change
—HELEN C. SCHABEL, *teacher, Tapan Junior High School, Ann Arbor, Michigan.*

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