

# 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 reenforcing  
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 country's 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  
couldn't do it that way  
but that's  
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 won't be long  
before  
he will be forgetting  
his little boy's self  
and assuming  
the responsibilities  
that are his  
have been his  
and he didn't know it  
until he  
felt it  
surge through his being  
and  
he experienced  
a change

—HELEN C. SCHABEL, teacher, Tappan Junior High School, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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