

The Importance of People

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Inquiry

Not being bound by habit
the teacher wondered about
(and casually questioned)
those accepted procedures
which had become hers
as a portion of teacher-lore,
demanded by parents,
anticipated by children,
even desperately imposed
by some administrators.

As she gained a tenuous control,
she could not ignore
the dreary failures,
the stifling lethargy,
the ritualistic indoctrination
of young minds;
for she had come to love,
respect, and hold in wonder
the awesome diversity
of these girls and boys.

To ease her disquietude, the teacher
reached into the clutter of
new ideas and untried ways,
dipped into a book, asked a question,
imitated another—and said,
"This may be an answer!
I will test and try,
adjust and watch,
and make of this
something good and new."

Removing an offensive bit of practice,
the teacher
smoothed the "new" into
the pattern of her teaching,
leaving carefully undisturbed
the comfort of the widely acknowl-
edged,
the most hallowed of the traditional—

for these were
beyond question,
the canons and tenets
upon which all else was based.

Pleased with this accomplishment, the
teacher
welcomed each irritant which
could not be avoided,
and ingeniously incorporated it
into something better.
This became the fabric of her teach-
ing.

By instinct and trial,
through faith and kindness,
she began to achieve
an artistry in teaching.

Then she was forced to question, not
only the potpourri
of her own methods,
but the handed down,
the long established,
the very thinking of her own
recognized and most honored teach-
ers.

Like a homeless ant
she darted about,
frantically seeking
some bit of security.

Vainly the teacher tried to bolster the
toppling
educational structure.
She searched for answers.
She asked for confirmation.
She defended almost blindly.
And finally she was caught
within a maze of swirling conflicts,
a fog of confusion, frustration,
and ever mounting tension.

Then one amazing day, with calm de-
liberation,
the teacher gave the structure
a firm and mighty shove.
And as the dust settled,
she pushed through the debris
and spread it widely apart.
Then she took time
to observe, to consider,
to search out a place
to start again.

The teacher selected one iridescent
particle.
She scrutinized it from all sides.
She pushed through the many colors,
worked past the inviting sheen.
She tested, checked, and prodded.
She honed it down to a oneness.
She dissected,
then described,
reducing it to the essence
of its own reality.

She reached into the web of her imagina-
tion
to find a way to explain
all that she dimly sensed
about this one particle.
She turned to passages in books.
She dug back into the past.

She played with it,
placing it first
in the center of one pattern,
then on the edge of another.

The teacher was beginning to know
several particles well.
She sorted and weighed and sought.
This one belonged with another.
A third must be set aside.
Here was one that might be a key
to the pattern of a whole.
And from the confusion
spots of harmony
and relatedness
began to emerge.

Week followed weary week, and still
she persisted.
There were doubts of self.
There was discouragement,
relieved by tantalizing glimpses
of a path that she might follow,
a direction she might go.

When asked why she persisted
she could only say—
"To draw the fragment of a dream,
to some day answer someone's need."

—MARY HARBAGE, *Editor, News Ex-
plorer and News Trails, Scholastic Mag-
azines, Inc.*

High School

(Continued from page 372)

such ideas are taught for specific reasons,
then they will most likely boost the pro-
gram and assist in overcoming difficulties
which might otherwise be stumbling
blocks to the success of the program.

Avenues such as the local news media,
presentations at local civic and profes-
sional organizations, "back-to-school-
night," printed materials prepared espe-
cially for and distributed to parents,
programs offered by the school which
are designed particularly for parents are
some of the procedures that have been
tried successfully in certain localities
throughout the country. The writer be-
lieves that no one of these is sufficient
within itself, but that a combination of

such ideas and others that will occur to
local administrators should be pursued.
Iteration is necessary here: *parents must
be kept informed.*

Once a locality has implemented a re-
vision of the mathematics curriculum, the
local school authorities should engage in
a constant state of evaluation and re-
evaluation of the program. Nothing be-
comes so static as a program that is al-
lowed to "rock along" without constant
vigil and alertness to pitfalls that should
be dealt with at the earliest possible
moment. No one program as now con-
ceived is designed to be a panacea for
the ills of mathematics instruction. Nev-
ertheless, through the use of one such
program, a local program adapted spe-
cifically to local needs and feasibilities
can be built. The time to act is now!

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