

“Getting To Know You”

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Teachers and others may accomplish much as they come to know one another's authenticity, realness, and aliveness. Four strategies for this purpose, and the steps by which they may be carried out, are suggested here.

WHEN Anna was called to the small country of Siam to teach the King's household, her conviction was that it was essential “to get to know” the children at an intimate level before she taught them. “Getting to know all about them” was Anna's way of caring, her way of prizing them as individuals. Conversely it may be equally important for children to know and understand their teacher, to reach out to the teacher in a more personal way.

It is intriguing to the authors as they work with groups how much people are interested in knowing them on more human terms—to experience the authenticity, the realness, the aliveness of the teacher. In reciprocal, open, honest dialogue, learning becomes full of possibilities both for the teacher and learner, in fact this dichotomy of teacher (separated from, unknown to) learner becomes teacher-learner in an atmosphere of trust. Thus self disclosure offers reciprocal growth possibilities.

We believe this more intimate relationship is especially important with children as, for example, when a teacher opens his or her life to them in quiet dignity by saying, “These are some of the things I believe in but I don't expect you to slavishly follow me or adopt my beliefs. I offer you my alterna-

tives only for you to consider.” In this thoughtful way the teacher shows he or she too is searching for truth and is willing to share as a gift whatever wisdom he or she has discovered in the search.

To aid in this search for authenticity the authors offer four values clarification strategies as possible approaches to becoming real, honest human beings to students.

Strategy 1. “What I Believe”

Step 1: Write on a sheet of paper 15 things you love to do. In this way you inventory your life to discover what things make life most satisfying and meaningful.

Step 2: In order to help you clarify which of these “loves” are really important values that affect your behavior and thus are important for students to know ask yourself:

- a. Have I chosen these loves freely?
- b. Have I chosen them from among alternatives?
- c. Are they chosen after some reflection and thought?
- d. Do I prize and cherish them?
- e. Do I publicly affirm them when appropriate?
- f. Do I act upon them?
- g. Are they part of a consistent pattern in my life?

Step 3: Choose any three of your loves that meet all seven of these demanding stan-

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dards because these can be considered real values in your life. They have been established through your own experience; for now, at least, they provide your life with direction and purpose.

Step 4: Tom T. Hall, musician/composer, sings about the wisdom of an old black man he once met in Miami. The old man shared with him the idea that in all the world there were only three things that really added up as being important: "Old dogs, children, and watermelon wine"—a curious yet valid combination of loves from out of one man's experience (from the album, "Tom T. Hall . . . The Storyteller," Mercury Records). We now ask you to "boil down" your 15 loves to the 3 most important to you and then simply talk for a few minutes to your class about these priorities in your life. An interesting way to present this small segment of your life is to make a collage portraying these three loves. This can be accomplished through symbolism or actual photographs of the

things, objects, and people whom you most love.

Step 5: After you have talked, invite your students to publicly interview you, thus providing them with further opportunity to know you more intimately.

Step 6: Ask the group to write a series of sentences beginning with:

I learned _____

I wish _____

I was happy that _____

I wonder _____

I was surprised that _____

Each student is asked to voluntarily give one or two statements from the above discoveries. Any student who does not wish to share his or her ideas has the option to pass at this time.

Step 7: If your students seemed interested in sharing their lives with you this 6-step strategy could then be used on successive days with each class member as focus person.

Educational Leadership Announces Themes for 1975-76

Manuscripts and/or photographs relevant to the proposed themes for the 1975-76 issues of *Educational Leadership* are now being solicited. Topics and deadlines for receipt of manuscripts are the following:

October: "Controversy and Education" (June 1, 1975)

November: "Nonformal and Continuing Education" (June 1, 1975)

December: "Multicultural Curriculum: Planning, Organization, Design, Implementation, and Evaluation" (July 1, 1975)

January: "Bicentennial Reflections on Curriculum" (August 1, 1975)

February: "Leadership in Education: A New Job Description" (September 1, 1975)

March: "Schools and the Law" (October 1, 1975)

April: "Curriculum Research: Implications for Teaching and Learning" (November 1, 1975)

May: "Career Education" (December 1, 1975)

Length of manuscripts should be approximately 1400 words typed, double-spaced (about five pages). General style should conform to that of the journal. Photographs and other illustrative materials whether directly related to an article or not are especially requested.

Manuscripts should be submitted in duplicate and materials to be returned must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope adequate to return material. Decisions on materials will be made as promptly as possible.

Materials should be addressed to Robert R. Leeper, Editor, *Educational Leadership*, Suite 1100, 1701 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

Strategy 2. "Life Inventory"¹

This strategy helps both teacher and student look at the major themes and events of their lives:

- What are some of the happiest things I can remember?
- What do I do well?
- How have I shown courage in my life?
- What have been turning points in my life?

These and other questions can bring the teacher's life into focus and, in turn, can make students more visible to the teacher if they share their lives in this way.

Strategy 3. "Contract With Myself"

To clarify where you are now and what you strive for in life is an important consideration. Life, to be most zestful and alive, must have meaning and focus. This strategy can have a personal clarifying effect for your life as well as help students gain some idea of "where you are coming from."

Using words or pictures in a collage to visually portray your search, consider the following:

Where I am now?

Barriers to becoming

What I want.

Strategy 4. "My Personal Story"

Sam Keen in his exciting book, *To a Dancing God*, suggests that each of us, sometime, should have an opportunity to write our own autobiography—our own story as a way to discover personal identity. He suggests several, central questions that help any individual discover a practical philosophy of life.²

¹ From: Sidney Simon et al. *Values Clarification, A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students*. New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1972.

² Sam Keen. *To a Dancing God*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970. p. 73.

"How did I come to be as I presently am?"
"What wounds or hurts do I resent having suffered?"

"Who were my important heroes and models?"

"What gifts was I given for which I am thankful?"

"What were critical decisions for which I was responsible?"

"If everything goes perfectly for me, how will things be in ten years?"

"What will I be doing? Feeling?"

"What things will I have?"

"What relationships?"

"What will I be looking forward to ten years from now?"

These questions underscore the idea that the *past* most certainly exists as a part of us now but in the same way the *future* also exists within us now. "That which the person *is* and that which the person *could be* exist simultaneously . . . thereby resolving the dichotomy between Being and Becoming."³

In summary, our thesis is that as a basis for effective learning the teacher must be known—the student also must be known—thus mutual needs are brought to awareness and then have a good chance to be reciprocally met. Sidney Jourard has posed two questions: "How can I love a person whom I do not know? How can the other person love me if he does not know me?"⁴

In these four strategies we have sought to reduce the mystery that sometimes exists between teacher/learner in hopes that an I/Thou relationship may be established which will, in turn, promote the reaching of common education goals and objectives, each having mutual, personal meaning.* □

³ Abraham Maslow. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1968. p. 160.

⁴ Sidney Jourard. *Transparent Self*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1964. p. 25.

* If you want to receive a bibliography on Values Clarification Materials and a listing of where workshops are being offered, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Dr. Sidney B. Simon, Box 846, Leverett, Massachusetts 01054.

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