"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 alternatives 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 estab-
lished through your own experience; for now, at least, they provide your life with direction
and purpose.

Step 4: Tom T. Hall, musician/com-
poser, 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 dis-
coveries. 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 inter-
ested in sharing their lives with you this
6-step strategy could then be used on suc-
cessive 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 Leader-
ship 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: Implica-
tions 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 illustra-
tive materials whether directly related
to an article or not are especially re-
quested.

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

Materials should be addressed to
Robert R. Leeper, Editor, Educational
Leadership, Suite 1100, 1701 K St.,
Strategy 2. “Life Inventory”¹

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

a. What are some of the happiest things I can remember?

b. What do I do well?

c. How have I shown courage in my life?

d. 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

“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.* ⁵


⁵ 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.