

"WHAT IS A GOOD TEACHER?"
TEACHING AS A SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY
pp. 33-37

The first point to understand is that there can be no significant innovation in education that does not have at its center the attitudes of teachers, and it is an allusion to think otherwise. The attitudes of the inquiring teacher are reflected in his behavior.

THE TEACHER RARELY TELLS STUDENTS WHAT HE THINKS THEY OUGHT TO KNOW. He believes that telling deprives students of the excitement of doing their own finding and of the opportunity for increasing their power as learners.

HIS BASIC MODE OF DISCOURSE WITH STUDENTS IS QUESTIONING. He sees questions as instruments to open engaged minds to unsuspected possibilities.

GENERALLY, HE DOES NOT ACCEPT A SINGLE STATEMENT AS AN ANSWER TO A QUESTION. He knows how the Right answer often serves to only terminate further thought. He is the most "it depends" learner in his class. He knows the power of pluralizing and the power of contingent thinking.

HE ENCOURAGES STUDENTS -- STUDENT INTERACTION AS OPPOSED TO STUDENT -- TEACHER INTERACTION AND GENERALLY HE AVOIDS ACTING AS A MEDIATOR OR JUDGE OF THE QUALITY OF IDEAS EXPRESSED. The individual student must learn to depend on himself as a thinker. The inquiry teacher is interested in students' developing their own criteria or standards for judging the quality, precision, and relevance of ideas. He permits such development to obscure by minimizing his role as arbitrator of what is acceptable and what is not.

HE RARELY SUMMARIZES THE POSITIONS TAKEN BY STUDENTS ON THE LEARNINGS THAT OCCUR. He assumes that one is always in the process of acquiring skills, assimilating new information, formulating or refining generalizations.

HIS LESSONS DEVELOP FROM THE RESPONSES OF STUDENTS AND NOT FROM A PREVIOUSLY DETERMINED "LOGICAL" SYSTEM. The only kind of lesson plan, or syllabus, that makes sense to him is one that tries to predict, account for, and deal with the authentic responses of learners to a particular problem; the kinds of questions they will ask; the obstacles they will face; their attitudes; the possible solutions they will offer; etc. In short, the "content" of his lessons are the responses of his students. Since he is concerned with the processes of thought rather than the end results of thought, he does not feel compelled to "cover ground", or to insure that his students embrace a particular doctrine, or to exclude a student's idea because it is not germane. He is engaged in exploring the way students think, not what they should think.