

EDUCATION DEFINED . . .
POLICY OR PUPILS PASSIONATELY PURSUING PERSONAL GROWTH? ©

ABSTRACT

[Purpose] The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of reverent relationships on learning. The hypothesis was, that if an instructor individualizes a curriculum, they can and will facilitate “the love of learning.” If projects were personalized, students would find themselves interested in their work. Hence, they would be more creative and productive. Discipline problems would diminish. **[Methodology]** Five groups of students, meeting for one hour a day, five days a week, for an eighteen-week period were evaluated. These pupils were required to take this class to meet their “Fine Arts” requirements. Few, if any had a sincere interest in the Arts. These were compared with similar groups, taught in manners that are more traditional. The groups included students from various socio-economic backgrounds. The majority of the students were from lower-middle class families. Parent participation was not high. Few, if any parents were involved in the students’ school lives. The grade levels were nine through twelve, high school. The school was one within the Anaheim Union High School District, in Cypress, California. In this essay, the story of one student is used as an example for many. Interviews, observations, production, and progress were the guides for assessment. **[Results]** Grades were not the determinant that differentiated the two groups. Grades may not be as objective as student interest is. Voluntary participation in after school and lunchtime activities, improved academic performance in all subjects, and enrollments in colleges were the factors used to verify a true commitment to learning. **[Conclusions]** A strong relationship between the educator and the student, between the student and the subject, contributes to and creates a strong relationship between the student and the school, between the student and the idea of education. Students learn, and love learning. **[Recommendations]** An educator must be patient, and remember, “Progress is a process!” Instructors must engage students where they are. They must authentically encourage learning, and be sensitive to the manner in which each individual student learns. Educators must empathize! Empathy is the best educator! Mentors must trust that they and the students can and will enjoy the growth, energy, and that each will grow greater!

EDUCATION DEFINED . . .
POLICY OR PUPILS, PASSIONATELY PURSUING PERSONAL GROWTH? ©

Everywhere we turn there is talk of education, educating all students equally, leaving no student behind, setting standards, creating charter schools, teaching the basics and yet, for me, the most basic of pedagogical principles, the one that brings the best in education is lost. For me, this basic pedagogical principle is advancing the love of learning.

When, why, where, and how did we as educators lose the practice of this principle? When, why, where, and how did we as a society lose our focus, leaving the love of learning behind? I believe we lost the love of learning when we chose to be a mere measure of standard and to saturate our schools in naive and narrow standards. Who made this choice? We did! We as a society, as administrators, as educators, as parents, and as individual persons chose to set and settle a standard. We are still setting and settling for simplistic standards.

We settle for being standard, sub-standard, superior to the standard, yet, still the measure is standard. We accentuate the normal, what was normal, is normal, and what will be normal, while we squelch what can be beyond normal. We measure the means, the methods, and the medium scores. We function in and focus on a world that weighs through “norms.” We speak of Authentic Assessment, Portfolio Review, of attending to and advancing individual Learning Styles. Then, we consider the time, the money, and the masses. We express how overwhelming the situation seems and ultimately, we choose to settle for what was or what is standard. For me, this choice creates a great loss for our children, the greatest loss.

Yet, we chose and continue to choose to lose our love of learning. We chose and are continuing to choose to ignore innovation, imagination, insight, and curiosity; instead, we do what is easy. We make excuses; we blame, we justify, rationalize, and intellectualize. We rather do what is convenient, comfortable and what we can quantify *quickly*. We want to grasp a sense of “reality” rather than grow what we do not yet know. We chose and continue to choose to focus on “doing” and “having” rather than on being. We chose and continue to choose to believe in impossibilities rather than create possibilities. We subjugate the soaring of our souls and subdue our desires and dreams. We opt for shortsighted standards in our own lives’ and by extension, in the lives’ of our children. We teach our children the legacy, and they, in turn, will teach their children as they were taught. The cycle will continue, unless . . .

I am offering my ideas on “unless,” sharing some thoughts, my theory, and a short story to illustrate my beliefs on learning. I am writing to those that teach, to those that set the “standards,” and those that postulate pedagogical policies. I am writing to educators, and that includes all of us, those that teach professionally, as parents, or as persons that are there, exchanging and engaging with others.

My “unless” proposes a shift of standards; I propose that we shift to a convention of caring. I propose creating a considerate, collaborative, and creative connection between a pupil, a purpose, a philosophy, pedagogy, and

passionate pursuits. I propose abandoning the standard of rote, routine, regimented, and rehearsed systems and creating curriculums grounded in love. I propose and believe that we learn when we love. We learn from those we love. We may love people that are powerful, passionate, or even punitive! There are many types of teachers. Knowingly or not, we *are* all teachers. Simultaneously, we are all students. We are each, forever learning. Lacking awareness, we will learn what our teachers teach, even if their methods evoke madness. As Will Rodgers suggests, "If you teach a lesson of meanness to a human or a critter, don't be surprised if they learn it."

Pupils are people. Human beings are complex, a growing essence. They evolve through experience not simple exchanges. To truly learn is to acquire authentic wisdom; beings must do more than receive material, memorize, recite, and recall. Realizing greater understanding comes when we cultivate and motivate a love of learning. People, pupils will learn what they love, from those that they love. The lessons that they love the most, those that are offered through loving relationships, will last a lifetime. In order to truly teach, educators, parents, administrators, and society, must "touch" students' minds through their hearts. We must meet our pupils where they live and ask them to teach us of them selves. We must listen, learn, and choose to grow greater from what our students teach us. We must collaborate with our students.

Pupils may experience what they believe and feel as profound problems. Parents may be a puzzle. Friendships may feel futile. Sensing their self worth may seem a struggle. Learners may feel troubled, ill, ignorant, hurt, or happy. Each of these emotions will effect their performance. In the course of the day, particularly in the classroom imagination, innovation, and investigation are invisible entities. Interestingly enough, the energy we are able to observe is far less powerful than the force of our feelings. Often and especially for most students, expressing emotions seems an empty effort. Teachers treat these as excuses. Educators rarely dare to delve into these unobservable areas.

The most formidable force in the classroom is the satisfaction of the instructor. The instructors' satisfaction seems to be our foremost concern. A teacher will infer and intuit a pupil's level of learning and then give the student a grade, "A" through "F." Educators [parents or administrators] grade pupils on how well we *perceive* that they grasp the information that we [believe we] are teaching. We etch these classifications in stone or at least in a pupil's "permanent record." This method is the standard *modus operandi* in most school districts, in the majority of schools, for nearly all teachers, in both public and private educational institutions.

Once you label me, you negate me.

Soren Kierkegaard [Danish Philosopher]

We desire, expect, or presume that a student can and will learn on our schedule. We believe that once we teach the techniques, provide the tools, offer the concepts a student can simply choose to learn it or not. I believe that nothing is "*just that simple*." Think back on the time, energy, and effort it took us to learn those things we truly love. When we learned to ride a bicycle, we started small; we began with a tricycle. We gained confidence. We loved our newfound freedom, the freedom to move about and to be. The more we grew [learned], the more we wanted to grow [learn]. We wanted to achieve greater feats. Then we went on to training wheels. We may have fallen; we did have fear, but oh, the power of dreams. Balance was the benefit of effort, energy, and emotion. It was not a simple or magical moment. We did not desire to ride a two-wheeler and then, immediately "just do it!" We learned, we grew, and we passionately pursued our personal growth.

As adults, we seem to forget our feelings, especially those we experience as students. Even a born scholar struggles to master novel material. Instead of remembering our pain, our fear, or our hesitation, we do what was done to us, what has always been done, and what we now deem 'works for us.' I ask, "Did the tried and true truly work well for us when we were students?" I suspect that at any age we can relate to the following experience.

You have a test to take. The subject may be math; it may be science, English, or even history. There are so many facts, figures, and formulas to remember. You gather all your notes; your corrected homework assignments, your books, and you cram your brain with information. You create flash cards. You memorize answers to any possible question, to every probable query. You recite the facts that you recall. You ask family members to quiz you. You call your classmates to ensure that you have all the particulars. You sleep on your books hoping the knowledge will filter in through osmosis. You wake early and review your books again. You read your notes as you walk, drive, or ride to school.

You receive the exam, and wham; you realize that you know all the answers. You do well. An "A+" is your grade! Then 5 minutes later, five hours later, five days later, five months later, or especially and even 5 years later, you know none of this information. You did not learn it for a lifetime, but memorized it for a moment, only a minute, or two, maybe longer, yet not for a lifetime.

Interestingly enough, I have asked many people, teachers, students, friends, family, and even acquaintances and still I have yet to met a single person that cannot relate to this experience. We teach by rote; we expect students to learn by rote. Rote is only a routine; doing rote can and often does become habit. Our habits continue. Rote does not advance wisdom. Wisdom is the wealth that evolves when we chose to be curious and aware. We as a society become easily entrenched in our habits. We are comfortable with what was and what comes.

Habits are to the soul what the veins and arteries are to the blood, the courses in which it moves.

Horace Bushnell [American 1802 - 1876, Father of American Religious Liberalism, Yale Law School, Author of *Reform against Nature*]

In defining ourselves, we may think that we are our habits. Many believe that what they do is their nature. People do not tend to consider that what we do is what we learn. Typically, we learn most of what we do when we are so young we do not recall or realize that we are learning. We begin learning while in the womb. We learn what to be and what to think, say, feel, and do. As we age, as we socialize, we learn to present ourselves as what we do.

When we discuss ourselves, we offer what we do as though this is who we are. Our career, our circumstances, and our condition pose as our nature. These are actually our choices. They are rarely conscious. Habits are convenient. Habits come easily. We move in manners that are casual and comfortable. We learn [our habits] from those we love. We learn our lessons well. Families, friends, and familiarity teach us how to move through life. We are all learning, always. Learning is a constant in living. The life we live seems so natural. We believe that we “just do it.”

We, as a society prefer that learning be swift and sweet. We establish structures that are short, simplistic, and standardized. We seek safe solutions. Advertisers know this. They rely on our desire for effortless answers. Marketing professionals and the companies they represent bank on us by the billions.

Among the multitudes of marketers, Nike™ saturated our minds with a belief that we *can* “Just do it.” Nike Vice President of Marketing, Bob Wood acknowledged a cynicism in the earlier “Just do it” advertising attitude. In January 1, 1998, Nike™ introduced an inspirational new campaign entitled, “I can.” “I Can,” “reflects the deep emotional connection that people have with sports in feeling good and setting personal goals.” Sue Levin, Women’s Brand Director discusses the inspirational theme of “I Can.” Sue Levin states, “When athletes become larger than life, sometimes we take for granted what it took [for] them to get there. What gets lost in all the cynicism is the incredible power and emotion that sports creates. Emotion, power and ambition are the things we all need more of, not less.” In 1998 even Nike™ realized that no one could simply “Just do it.”

Sadly, in my mind, we as educators “Just do it,” with little awareness for what we are creating. We teach; we often teach, just as we were taught taking learning for granted. Professional educators, from elementary school instructors to professors, policy makers, parents, persons in any profession, and actually, all of us, in every population express the cynicism of “just do it!” in word and deed. We may mistakenly believe, or more accurately, we may unknowingly believe that the methods that helped us to learn will be beneficial to others. I believe that it is vital to realize that what is best for one individual may be injurious for another. The past permeates our present. The past is powerful; it is part of our present, and until we consciously choose to know and to use what we know to change, the past will be our future.

For me, doing as was done before is not learning, it is merely mirroring or mimicking, doing, saying, thinking and sadly, sometimes being as expected, as instructed, or as is standard. Rote realizes little learning, at least not the learning that lasts a lifetime. I believe that learning is more than rote routines or rehearsed reviews. I believe that learning is looking, listening, challenging, and choosing to explore beyond what is known. I believe that learning evolves through curiosity, choosing challenges, and caring to discover what is *not yet known*.

Previously, presently, and probably some time soon, we will lecture, provide analogies, offer exercises, and test. Instructors teach the techniques, the standards and the formulas, and then expect their students to understand. Scholars train students to state the facts, do the drills, practice the process, and then promise that the pupils will progress. We may teach to the test. Educators may devise an examination that reviews the text. Teachers ask little of their learners. Memorize what the mentor says, retain what you read, acquire the information as though it is a possession and present it to the tutor as if it is a gift and yours to give. Advancing in schools is just that simple and we just do it. I propose that genuine learning is not a simple task, but a labor of love.

I believe that the type of learning that lasts a lifetime and empowers us evolves through empathetic exchanges. When someone gives credence to “who” we are, when another person believes in us, we are able to achieve beyond our own belief.

The mind is no match with the heart in persuasion; constitutionally is no match for compassion.

Everett M. Dirksen [Senate Minority Leader 1959 - 1969]

Who we are is an interesting exploration. We know to ask our youth “what do you want to be” not what do you want to have or to do and yet we teach them to do and to have. I find this curious. It seems that in the classroom and in much of life, we define a person by their cuteness, career, and circumstances, by their ethnicity, race, or religion. These standards, just as those used in testing and grading, exist only on the surface. We deem their intellect to be commendable or worthy of condemnation. We make determinations; we classify, stereotype. Often, we create self-fulfilling prophecies. We label students. We track their progress. We think, say, and do all of this in the name of caring.

Society claims to *care* for each and every learner. Every member of society seems to agree that we want our youth to succeed. Parents, public and private institutions, policies, and professionals stress success. The school districts, the state, and the nation set static standards to in an attempt to validate that we are concerned with growth and learning. Then, we continue to train, teach, and test to static set of standards. We state one mission and then stress

another. We maintain our means, methods, and manners. Learners must prove their worth and who they are on standardized tests we set before them. Yet, I ask, who among us is standard? Who learns or grows simply or in a standard manner.

Society, scientist, and sage stress or suggest *sensitivity* to our students, and yet pupils must perform as planned, and on the educator's schedule. Schools and scholars may teach to modalities, but test to codes. We do not offer interviews for audio verbal learners or an innovative, inventive project for the kinesthetic pupil. We do not ask students to evaluate their errors and submit their work continuously, *until they the learner feels satisfied that he, she, or they have learned and achieved success*. Currently, in many if not most of our classrooms, "success" is a set standard, a grade, granted to those that do, say, and think, as they are told.

Instructors assess pupils on their visible performance. Teachers examine the tests, the assignments, and the attitude of the student. Might we truly share with and care about the individual? A student may have great physical support, but little emotional assistance. A learner may have a well-trained memory, but may not know how to think. Teachers attempt to teach thinking skills through customary tactics. Instructors show, then tell, and expect students to absorb the wisdom. I offer this thought; thinking is not a possession to acquire, but a state of being. I cannot give you wisdom in the way I might give you gold. Beliefs build. Just as flowers, people bud, they blossom and bloom with nurturing and love.

In today's classrooms, boardrooms, and beyond, there is [little or rare or] no consideration for the person that thinks beyond what they are taught or told to think. There is ample shunning for a curious concern. Students that have the mind of a true scientist, which differs from a technician, know that knowledge is not fixed; answers are not simply correct or wrong. Students that stretch and seek greater wisdom than a simple right or wrong answer, those learners that look beyond the surface receive criticism for being "overly analytical." In truth, these aware students challenge the convention; their active desire to learn creates chaos in the classroom and, or in the community.

I believe and experience, as do many when asked to truly reflect on their own life experiences, that society does not seek to satisfy the innate human desire to grow. Educators, administrators, and the community do not care to meet the true needs of our population. Meeting the truest needs of our students is too costly, not easy, and initially it does not seem as efficient as what is standard. Time is tangible and therefore tantamount to the cost in the minds of many. We do not work for or with unique individual people [or pupils]. In each and every field, even in the field of education, our concern is only with the common populous or with popular philosophies, not with the profound or the power one creates when they are *passionately pursuing personal growth*, when they are empowered.

What we hope ever to do with ease, we must learn first to do with diligence.

Samuel Johnson [English Writer 1709-1784, Producer of *Dictionary of the English Language*, Contributor to *Gentlemen's Magazine*]

The popular and the profitable govern. Again, I offer Nike™ to illustrate what often is. Nike™ too chose to subjugate the "emotion, power, and ambitions that inspire personal pursuits." Nike™ chose to retain the "Just do it" slogan and to supplement this saying with the "I can" maxim. Now, years later, we rarely if ever witness the inspirational "I can!" The cynicism and simplistic "Just do it" survives. Habits indeed are challenges to change!

I wonder and I ask of our habits, those of our students' and of our selves. If our habit is to strive only for a set and surface standard of excellence, might it be a challenge to be and believe beyond this shallow sense? If we are honest with ourselves, we recognize that we stop ourselves. It is safer to set and settle for simple standards such, as the sky is our limit? Possibly, it once was and then we explored and traveled beyond the sky, into space.

We can and do, sadly, at times, create what we believe. Self-fulfilling prophecies are abounding. Might we be limiting our own learning, our teaching, our growth, and the growth of our pupils because of our standard belief? What might our students and our selves be and what might we choose to believe and then create?

We know what we are, but know not what we may be.

Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, IV, c. 1601

Do we believe in our students more than we believe in the current standards of operation? Do believe in practices that subvert a student's [a persons'] desire to passionately pursue personal growth? Do we care for the career path that enables the best of consumption or do we care to create a curriculum that creates a love of learning? Do we care more about policy or pupils?

Where pupils [people] are concerned, it is a challenge to care about oneself, to believe in oneself, when others do not seem to care about or for you. When others do not believe that you can go beyond what is now the best, you are less likely to do so. It is a challenge for our students' to care about themselves, when it seems that we do not act as though we care about them, about their concerns, about whom they are within, or when we do not seem to believe in them. When it seems that teachers, administrators, parents, and society only care about the grades, what is a pupil left to pursue.

The intention of this paper is to advance awareness for the power of personal relationships. When someone truly believes in us, cares about us as individuals, then we are more able to believe in ourselves. I believe as Morrie Schwartz, former professor at Brandeis University proposes, "Love always wins." For me winning equates to

Policy? Pupils Passionately Pursuing Personal Growth ©

Betsy L. Angert • 37 Eastmont • Irvine, California 92604. 3318 • 949. 552.5525

Page 4 of 8

growing and the journey that brings us to being our best. For me, winning is not the product of a competition, winning is not a state; instead it is an ever-evolving evolution. I believe that winning is learning, growing, glowing from within. Winning for me is a misnomer; it is not a beginning and certainly not an end. Winning is a mere moment. Growing continues, moment by moment. I believe that the strong grow continually and are eternally successful.

There are times that students, teachers, or anyone may appear to be successful and strong. Any of us may believe we are the best at what we do. Yet, we do what we know, what comes easily. Innately, we crave a challenge; however, we may lack the confidence to create a greater journey. Many, take the path that most others also travel. It may seem safe though secretly we sense that it is far less gratifying.

We can choose to grow, but it is easier to strut-our-stuff, the stuff we already have and know. We all have skills, talents, and we can settle into these or we can explore and be beyond the standard.

PRACTICE OF PEDAGOGY

I offer this story in hopes that any of us may remember, reflect, and realize what might more authentically be “Excellence in Education.” The following is an actual incident that occurred while I was teaching Drawing and Painting at a High School in California. This story is not exclusively an “art education” experience. I have taught and have been a student in many disciplines. For me, all learning, throughout life shares similar characteristics; the greatest of these is human action and interaction. I share this story as a epic simile.

The year could be any year, the students any students, situations are not exactly the same, but always similar. For most of the students at this High School, Art was a requirement, not an elective. Thus, many of them felt forced to take this class, to fulfill their mandatory Fine Arts credit. Students expressed that creating art was for the “talented” and they assured me; they were not. *I think talent is an evolution, resulting from encouraging experiences.*

Many students said that for them, Drawing/Painting was irrelevant; it held little appeal. Midway through the semester a transfer student named Phil joined our class. Students felt Phil was talented, but just as the others; he preferred to do what he did well. Phil’s was comfortable doing what came easily. Art classes had always been an easy “A” for him, requiring minimal thought or effort. It quickly became clear to Phil that in this class, learning, growing, and gaining greater knowledge were required. Improving, and expanding one’s awareness, wisdom, and acquiring skills is what I encourage, express, and expect.

I feel the need to interject here my own conflict with the word “expect” or “expectations.” My expectations are not an etched rubric, platitude, precept, or a particularly prescribed edict. My only expectation is of personal growth. I expect and encourage a growth that energizes the pupil, the person, and one that cannot be calculated or considered by an outsider. I accept that we are all a work in progress and life affords us an opportunity to create a living portfolio. Productions, revisions, student critiques, reflective interviews, and student journals actively demonstrate what learners’ learn. To some, it seems like “a lot of work.” Some students expressed discontent. Phil was among these. He confronted me stating, “You expect too much.”

Phil questioned why he needed to expand his skills and knowledge. Why did he need to explore? In comparison to other students, Phil was great; his work was amidst the best, possibly even better than the best. In teaching, I do not suggest comparisons. Phil recognized that for me, he and his work were unique and stood alone. Another person’s work is his or her own. I compare Phil’s work to Phil’s other endeavors and not to the efforts of others. He stated that he was satisfied with his skills and abilities. Phil, knowingly, was choosing *not* to learn, or to grow.

I considered this decision limiting. *Phil’s given skills were fine, however, I believe grades are a reflection of growth.* The idea of going beyond what he knew was scary for Phil. Phil was reluctant to approach what was unfamiliar. People profess and pretend to have no fears, yet, I wonder is there anyone that truly does not fear the unknown. The unknown may be failure, and again, I wonder, might it be greater success.

I felt and feel Phil is similar to all of us in that we can and seem to think, say, do, feel, and be what comes easily. We can see success as an action that is “Just that simple.” We may believe that we can “Just do it” and we will “obtain” success or at least a surface sense of it. However, to be better than we imagine, that takes time, inner strength, support, and energy. I believe that being better than we might imagine is what we will be when we passionately pursue personal growth.

In my interactions with Phil, as in my interactions with all others, I chose to consistently discuss and demonstrate my trust and belief in him. Only he can choose to believe in himself, however, I wanted him to be certain through my words and deeds that I did believe in him.

One person with a belief is equal to a force of ninety- nine who have only interest.

John Stuart Mill [Philosopher]

Actions and interactions with Phil were expressions of what I accept and strive to live. The student and I must develop and maintain a solid relationship; it is essential for [mutual] greater growth and authentic learning.

Policy? Pupils Passionately Pursuing Personal Growth ©

Betsy L. Angert • 37 Eastmont • Irvine, California 92604. 3318 • 949. 552-5525

Page 5 of 8

Supportive, sharing and understanding must be consistent. The connection evolves through continual exchanges. Exchanges that engage, involve, evolve, and advance meaning in one's life and, once experienced feel essential.

As I engaged in my personal pedagogy, exchanging authentically with Phil, and then again, upon reflection, I realized that I felt and feel great empathy for his fear of the unknown. We can all question our own ability to cope successfully with a challenge. I believed in Phil's depth and quality. I did not question that greater growth was possible for him. He could choose to create achievable goals. Goals are reachable! He could realize and did, his dreams. I knew, I know and believe that we all can be what we want to be. Sadly, we are each our own worse critic. Believing we can be what we want to be can be a challenge. Being the best may seem impossible.

Every noble work is first impossible.

Thomas Carlyle

Years ago some considered my circumstances impossible. I broke my arm badly. There were numerous fractures in my arm; there were breaks in every direction. I knew I needed help in healing. I needed more than a wish, a prayer or a dream; I needed to believe in me. I decided to buy the inspirational gift my mother gave me as a child, a classic book, *The Little Engine That Could*. When I re-read it, I was not surprised to discover that my memory of what my mother had read to me as a child, was not the same as it actually appears. My mother changed the ending, creating a more encouraging message. I endeavor to share and live what my mother gave to me. My mother recited, "*I think I can. I think I can. I know I can. I can!*"

Whether we consider ourselves teachers or students, we will forever be both, simultaneously. I believe it is vital to consider that we are all Don Quixote; we dream the impossible dream. We all need and crave a supportive, patient, gentle, trusting soul that believes we can be what we want to be.

COLLABORATIVELY AND COLLECTIVELY, WE GREW.

Be it with Phil or another, I am less concerned with students liking me than I am with them liking themselves. I respect Phil for questioning my expectations. I encourage "real" questions, concerns and discussions of these. I believe that learning is possible and intrinsically motivating when one understands why it is important to them. For me, dialogue and the exchanging of ideas are opportunities. When a student initially resents a request for doing what may seem difficult, he/she is, at least, thinking. When thinking through challenges, a creative ethos evolves. Later, he, she, we can look back and laugh at our own stubborn, scary processing.

For me, there is humor in how strongly we can challenge another's belief in us, as did Phil. He realized his accomplishments. He appreciated my true belief in him and his abilities. Phil initially, considered my belief that grades are a reflection of growth unfair. He may have also questioned my belief in him as being unfair; nonetheless, as he began to expect more of himself and of me, and to accept. He grew. Sharing Phil's discovery and acknowledgment of his own quality and his respect for himself was an honor.

Once Phil explored new horizons, he found them exciting and openly told me how much he enjoyed his new knowledge and abilities. He enthusiastically shared that he realized his ability to see more. *Though the world had not changed, his perception of it had. His awareness grew in academics and in the arts.* He seemed excited by what he now noticed and appeared stimulated and motivated. A more confident sense of self was emerging. Phil became interested in increasing his own skills and awareness. Phil's energy extended to others. He was motivated and motivated others.

Phil heard from other students that I would not be returning to teach at this High School the following semester. One day, while checking on Phil's progress, I saw that he looked upset. I asked what was wrong. He shared what he heard and then asked if this was true. Was I leaving? When I told him that it was, he groaned and complained. I asked, why was he complaining? He had told me that I expect "too much." He said, "That was before." He said that he realized how much he could and would learn in my class and that he looked forward to learning more. I was pleased and astounded by his sincere admission. When teaching there are many moments that remind me of how much I enjoy facilitating learning, being a teacher!

I believe and experience that we all can make a difference in the lives of those we touch. We each effect and affect others. The process is never ending. Empathy is truly the greatest educator. When we are sensitive to our own limited sense of self then we are able to accept that people need people to achieve more than they might ever imagine is possible. It is exhilarating to share, care, and grow [separately and together.] I enjoy partaking in this process. Students teach. An aware educator learns how to teach to individuals, learns to relate materials in a manner that is more meaningful, real, and relevant to the unique person that he or she is supporting. Each student, each person, each entity has its own style. It is essential that an instructor identify an essence. We all desire to be important, acknowledged, and appreciated. I believe we learn when we love, when we feel loved, when we share lessons with love. Empathy is the best educator.

There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than there is for food.

Mother Teresa

For many educators, it may not seem possible to create a relationship where we listen, hear, respond, and collaboratively learn with each individual student. There are too many pupils, too many parents, too many projects and too little time! There is curriculum to write, lessons to teach, and grades to gather. "There is just too much to do and not enough time in a day." We focus on what students do, on what we do. What we do, what they do, is of little depth and lesser quality than who we each are. If we choose to consider whom the student is as a unique individual, if we show that, we genuinely care, if we consistently connect, discipline problems are next to null. The paper work that these problems generate is nonexistent. The telephone calls, the daily contracts are no longer necessary. If a teacher and student are working together as trusted colleagues, each loving the process and the progress, then they are engaged in learning, listening, and looking for answers, rather than attention.

He, who adds not to learning, diminishes it.

The Talmud

I, as a teacher learn from my students. This is true whether I am instructing in the arts, the sciences, or in the social sciences. In all that I teach, I, as a learner look to my teachers, the students. Just as we are more than what we do, people do not exist in a single role. I am never solely a teacher or a student. My relationships are reciprocal. I learned from Phil. He taught me who he was, what he needed and wanted. At times, I learned these through his expressions and by observing what he was reluctant to pursue or explore. Phil taught me how to teach him. His being expanded my awareness. I was his teacher and I was his student. He was my teacher and he was my student. The relationship was one of reciprocal reverence and respect.

The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

People/pupils, just as Phil did teach me who they are. Phil, as all persons/students, shows and tells me how they learn. They, we all offer what we think, how we feel, and what interests us. If only others, or I, as a teacher, as a student choose to be sensitive to what those in my life, in my classroom, are teaching me. I will learn. I believe that everyone does learn; every one does teach. My students and I can learn and teach if I, if we choose to.

Here I am including a summary of my personal philosophy and pedagogy. Please consider this. Please know and trust that if you would want to discuss this I am open to the opportunity. I ask that we advance our pupils not only from grade to grade; I ask that we advance their passionate pursuit of personal growth.

My Attitude and Approach to Teaching is to Appreciate and be Aware.

Experience teaches me that when we Believe and Trust that Learning is Effortless and Pleasurable. It Is!

- Knowledge is power, I believe that knowing is empowering!
- Without a belief in oneself, school can be an overwhelming challenge.
- When we believe in our ability, our goals increase.
- Discuss awareness for all that we are, and all that surrounds us, offer the why, where, what, how, and when!
- Build awareness of interrelationships between the course of study and all other subjects.
- Assist pupils in realizing that all is relevant to their personal interests.
- The reward of teaching is assisting others to be aware, share, and grow.

Intrinsic Motivation is invigorating!

- When learning is intrinsically motivated, the rewards are deeper and lasting.
- External rewards, extrinsic motivation, may assist in the *appearance* of learning; often the depth is short term.
- Production is greater when it is personally gratifying.
- Experiences effect what we expect.
- When educators empathetically create affirming experiences, students will believe learning is pleasurable!

My Idea of Ideal and The Intention Behind a Desire to Educate is . . .

- Schools and teachers providing the knowledge necessary for students to gain greater understandings.
- Students and teachers continually learning how to complete desired tasks, as though they are labors of love.
- Instructors finding ways to assist students in developing a sense of personal satisfaction.
- Educators choosing to provide the affirming attention they too crave.
- Learning being personally relevant for the students otherwise studying is uninteresting and burdensome.
- Students can realize that information is there for the asking and the taking if educators share the substance.
- Instructors informing and showing students how easy it is and joyous it is to retrieve volumes of guidance.
- Learning is an excellent experience . . . "when we know better, we do better!" states Maya Angelou
- Students able to believe they can learn anything they choose to, trusting that others believe in them.

A Style of Caring and Sharing is Strength.

- Maintain a strong belief in students! Build a strong reciprocal relationship between students and self.
- *Build trust.* Self-respect coupled with reverence for others serves learning and achievements.
- Know, Honor, Act on the knowledge that learning is a process acquired through reflections and sharing.
- Offer extensive responses, open opportunities for exchanging ideas. Revisions are part of the process.
- Remain flexible, open, and available, exchanging ideas, respecting, listening, learning, and collaborating.
- Accept that growth is not simple; it occurs over time, not in a lesson [s], nor is it evident in a test.
- Discuss and Promote Awareness of the students. Be sensitive to the *individual* Learning Style and person.

- Endeavor to reach the visual, audio, kinesthetic learners effectively, while *focusing on human interaction*.
- Discuss reasoning and expectations for each lesson.
- Encourage students to express their position. *Listen and exchange*.
- Create an *encouraging environment* for investigating and *internalizing* information. Believe!
- *Share students' successes with others*, fellow students, fellow teachers, parents, staff, and community.

Role as a Teacher

- Teacher/student must develop and maintain a relationship of mutual trust and respect.
- Structure learning/studying so that it is interesting and enjoyable.
- Teacher is a tool, collaborating, assisting in the development of students' securing self-worth.
- Recognize the students [who they are as individuals, how they learn, and their work.]
- Be consistent! Consistency is the key to effective teaching.
- Be patient, progress is a process!
- Engage, Encourage, and Empathize! Empathy is the best educator!
- Enjoy the growth, energy, and greater growth!

"To teach is to learn twice."
Joseph Joubert [French Critic]