

The Continuum

of STUDENTS

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Students come in all shapes, sizes, colors, flavors, and of different qualities and quantities. There are no external labels to read indicating quality of the internal product on these various sized and shaped containers. The well known story of the "animal school" adeptly describes the cross section of students in the average class, depicting a student body of ducks, rabbits, squirrels, eagles and eels enrolled in a uniform curriculum of running, climbing, swimming and flying. It does not take much imagination to see that each of those students would excel in parts of that uniform course of study and fail other parts; however, the central theme of this story seems to be in the fact that every student failed because he worked so hard in his weak areas that he couldn't even perform in those areas in which he normally excelled. (Example: the duck failed in swimming because he wore out his web feet trying to pass the running course). Every teacher should review this yarn of the animal school from time to time as he contemplates his relationships with students.

The term student usually denotes scholar. A scholar learns well from lecture and discussion. He performs well on a pencil and paper type of evaluative exercise where answers are "parroted" back to the teacher. He is often slighted by the busy teacher, however, in that he frequently is not taught well how to research efficiently for himself in his quest for knowledge. This research, which is so vital a part of the scholar-student's education, may be library research, informed observation, or a synthesis of the research of others. At all levels it should reflect the impulse of the scholar-student in his searching for answers which are not obvious to him. A denial of this impulse because of the lack of leadership from his teachers may develop a lazy student who fails by far to achieve at his potential, either in school or in life. The scholar-student is a very real challenge to his teachers and most frequently is neglected by the overworked teacher. This constitutes a serious loss and serious threat to our nation when such potential is ignored and left underdeveloped.

The scholar-student is normally conscious of his need to know but frequently is not aware of his need to communicate. This, too, should become the challenge of the teacher. The scholar-student tends to become informed in one, sometimes limited, field of knowledge. It is frequently exceedingly difficult for the scholars of the natural sciences, those of the social sciences, and those of the humanities to communicate or understand one another. Because of this mutually exclusive ignorance, the world becomes a more difficult place in which to live.

This challenge of teaching communication to the scholar-student may be met by showing, for example, the link history affords between the humanities and the social sciences or the link of biology between the social sciences and the physical sciences. Of course, the student who embraces and understands the interrelationships of the humanities, the natural sciences and the social sciences should be counseled into the profession of teaching.

At the other end of the continuum of students is the practical-student. Here is a type of student perhaps well illustrated by another story called "The Voice of the Low I.Q." To quote one paragraph of this story:

"Miss Brown didn't like it because I always asked a lotta questions. She thought I was bein' fresh, but I wasn't. There's a lotta things I want to know about. I never got mad when she asked me a lotta questions all the time. I answered them. I've got lots of answers—but they always seem to fit the wrong questions. Anyway everything's changing all the time, so what's the use of learning a lotta things today, when they won't even be true tomorrow? I know heaps of things Miss Brown don't know. Like where to find bird's nests and how to fix a leaky pipe, and what the baseball scores are. She has to send for the janitor when the lights go out, or the window shade tears. I can do lots of things, if I don't have to read how in a book first."

This student only grows well under the leadership of a teacher who recognizes that this student's abilities are not illustrated well by the pencil and paper I.Q. test but that he truly has potential for educational growth and development of a special nature quite different from that of the scholar-student. The challenge by this student to the teacher is as real and genuine as that of any other student. This student is not overawed by displays of book knowledge or meaningless exercises. He does learn well by demonstration, example and practice. He responds well to lessons designed to teach participation and cooperation in group enterprises. He needs to be taught security and how to be known as an individual. He will recognize his own importance in the world of work and can be taught an appreciation of the importance of an honest day's work for a full day's pay. He can be taught to be proud of the skills he possesses and that he has developed them under the guidance of a good teacher.

The teacher who finds the entire continuum of students in his classroom—the scholar-student to the practical-student—has no easy task to

serve adequately all his students. But if our society is to be best served through education, it must be accomplished. The students all along the continuum, from one end to the other, respond to a teacher who is both a leader and a helper of learning. Students who have been well taught are quick to agree that it takes more skill to

put into a student's heart the ideal of democratic living than it does to take out his adenoids, that it is more difficult to develop in him an appreciation for the good, the true, and the beautiful than it is to remove his appendix, and that it is more important that a warped personality be straightened than that a crooked arm be made whole.

Our Most Important Product | the STUDENT

by Hilbert Kahl

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One of our first objectives as members of The National Association of Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture, is improvement of teaching.

Studies on how we can improve our teaching have been made the past few years. I'm sure that many reports that we have heard and read have been most valuable. Many more studies will be made in the future to keep us up to date in our instruction, but let's hope we never get so involved in subject matter and teaching techniques that we overlook our most important product—THE STUDENT.

Regardless of the materials we might collect, the visual aid materials we may use, or the finest teaching methods, we must remember that we can't lose sight of the product we are working with—THE STUDENT.

The first two years at the college level are probably the most critical years to many of our students. For most of them, it will be the first time away from home, away from parental guidance that they may have had; it will be the first time the student will have to make decisions on his own. He will also be forming attitudes, both academic and social. Our purpose should be to help him achieve in the classroom, but it is equally important that we strive to help him reach greater levels of self-confidence and maturity in personal development. This help should be made available to him at the beginning of his college life.

I'm sure we all find that each beginning year brings us new challenges as each class and each individual presents new problems that must be handled differently. Seldom do we find that one student's problems—whether they be academic, social, financial, or personal—can be directly identified with another's. Therefore, it seems of great importance that while we are sharpening our performance through attention to mastery of subject matter and excellence in instruction, we must also extend our efforts to

communicate with the student, to give time to listen to him, to help guide him if and when he needs our guidance, and especially to try to understand him as an individual.

There are many things to be considered while working with this delicate product. One of the most important is communication: it must be established first. He has just entered a new world, and he must know that we are here to help him where and whenever we can.

In an article, "The Power of the Open Heart," Ardis Whitman wrote, "True communication begins when we not only accept the other person, but also accept him with delight—despite all his faults and frailties—in a world where people need as they have never needed before, the gift of speaking to one another in trust and understanding."

As the number of students we have in our schools increases, communication becomes more and more difficult because of time. But how can we help the student with his problems unless we can communicate with him? Only after a student learns to communicate and feels free to express himself have we taken the first step towards developing our end product. In addition to our lesson preparations, our teaching loads, and our many other activities, communication with the student is still a must: it should be cultivated at every opportunity.

We must, of course, give attention to curriculum. We might define curriculum as a body of prescribed educational experiences, under supervision, which leads to qualifications in citizenship, trade, and profession. Curriculum should be carefully planned, evaluated, and revised from time to time.

Our methods of teaching may be the best possible: but if our materials are outdated, we are not providing our end product with the necessary information that he should be receiving. Many of our students will not have the opportu-