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Robert Sandell
Hastings Public Schools, Michigan

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HIGH SCHOOL REMEDIAL READING OR BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS?

Robert Sandell

HASTINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

There are some students in most schools who are neglected. These students are generally termed slow even though their problem may originate from a lack of intelligence, a lack of mental content, or a lack of motivation from parents, teachers, and society. Even though the problems in reading that these students experience stem from different problems, they are generally lumped together and given to one teacher in one class because they have all been classified as remedial students.

How can we teach the child whose reading is not up to the level necessary for a successful school career? Many of these children are from home environments entirely different from our own. Many have a set of values that will shock or disgust the easily offended. Some of the students are complete discipline problems and many of these students are trying to hide their failure behind a veneer of indifference or aggressiveness.

The self-concept of many of these children is also found to be extremely poor. They have managed to do poorly in most areas throughout school and when they enter this year's class they cannot see why it should be any different.

It is the writer's opinion that the only way a teacher is going to teach these students reading or any other subject is by establishing good rapport with the child and by helping the child build his self-concept. These students must be shown that they are worthwhile and that the teacher feels that they are worthy of teaching. Until this is accomplished it is almost senseless to try to give a concise program for reading improvement to the child.

The teacher must be prepared for difficulties, a slow pace, and many heartbreaks along the way. Many of these students have learned for years that failure is their way of life and that the teacher is their natural enemy. It is no easy task to correct this outlook.

How can the teacher show the student that he is really interested in him and wants to help? Probably by accepting the child as he comes to the teacher instead of trying to make the child over into the teacher's image of a nice little student. A teacher can attempt to make changes

in the student but Heaven help the teacher who tries to make a change before the child has accepted him as someone worth listening to.

It is almost impossible for some teachers to like a student who comes into their classrooms with soiled clothing, using a vocabulary which is neither grammatically or socially acceptable, and who looks at the teacher in such a way that the teacher is sure that the student is planning the most torturous and involved death he can possibly find. But the teacher *must* accept him. As soon as the teacher launches into a lecture on the necessity of bathing regularly and using the proper care for teeth and breath, and condemns students who do not conform to these regulations, the teacher has lost all hope of ever really communicating with this child.

It has been pointed out by many people that the educator should, at all times, be a model of the good and clean and holy so that all the students may see him and emulate him. The only trouble with this philosophy is that too many educators place themselves on such a high plane that the socially, economically, or intellectually deprived student no longer sees him as a model, but sees him rather as a stuffy figure who is trying to demonstrate that he feels superior to the child.

Is it bad for the students to know that the teacher can lose his temper and get upset about things? Is it bad that the students know that their teacher gets frustrated, or sometimes might not dress in sartorial splendor? Perhaps for the type of students we are dealing with here, it is better that they know he is human rather than think that the teacher spends all of his spare time polishing his halo. A refusal to discuss or answer personal questions may be pedagogically correct according to some educators, but it does nothing for the deprived student except make him see his teacher as someone who does not even wish to communicate with the child.

All right, what if we accept the child as he is and do not try to hide our true selves from him? Isn't he still going to be insulted with the remedial materials and procedures that will be used in trying to help him improve his reading?

No! Not if the teacher has placed the student on an adult basis before he begins. This is not to say that the child should be allowed to do only what he wants when he wants, but that he should have some choice in how things are done and he should also be charged with the responsibility of helping himself in reading. It is not enough to say that we are going to improve his reading, we must also make him want to improve. Until we get this attitude we can do nothing.

How can we help establish this attitude? The child must know

that the teacher realizes he has a problem and wants to help him improve it. Don't expect the child to come up and say "I have a reading problem, help me." The teacher must be willing to assure the child that it is a problem that can be overcome. With some students, this realization is never gained, and the student does not make any progress because he feels that he is unable to improve.

Compromise is also a good technique to use when working with students of this type. The teacher should be willing to exchange something that the student wants for something the teacher wants. The deprived child has too many times been told that he will have only what someone wants him to have.

If the child is willing to exchange proper conduct for the privilege of sitting next to a window, make the trade. It might destroy the neat little pattern of chairs but it will gain the attention of the child. If the child is willing to exchange four days of study for one day of student directed activities take the student up on it! Isn't it better to have four days of work and one day of relaxed activity than it is to have five days of attempted work with constant strain because of the failure of the student to respond? The exchange still gives the teacher the control because he still has the authority to change the conditions if the student reneges on his part of the bargain. But on the other hand, it gives the student a feeling that the teacher is willing to take the student's feelings and desires into consideration when the program is being planned.

After rapport is built between the student and the teacher; after the student improves his self-image; after the teacher and the child start working as a team; then the teaching of reading can take place. If the child realizes that everything that is being done in the class is for his benefit his attitude will change and the student will make a determined effort to improve.

Isn't it doing something good for the child to help him change his attitude? Wouldn't it be nice if we could have every student who enters our classes in the fall with a poor attitude leave with an attitude in the spring like the one expressed by the following tenth grader?

I like English because we have a cool teacher. And I meen real cool. He dosen't give us the scope (magazine) went we want it but he sure has some good books in his class. hes good about leding us sit by the windows. but if we dont do our work or pay attention we can't sit by the windows. Hes being good about leding us listen to records today. We can sit anywhere in class we want. Hes the best teacher in the school.

None of this is a lye. He cool.

A teacher can feel proud of a student like this, not because the student has said nice things about the teacher, but rather because the student has developed an attitude that the school is not a prison and that he is not going to be unsuccessful in everything he does! It all comes down to the belief that the teacher can be the most important factor in any reading program. If the teacher and child begin to function as a team and if the teacher shows an interest in what the child is doing, the teacher has begun the teaching of reading.