

THE ENLIGHTENED TEACHER

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As I visit the different classrooms around our conference I am happy to see many good things taking place. The students are involved and excited about class projects and learning. Why? Their teachers are teaching to their various learning styles and broadening their learning environments. Students are given activities that allow them to be out of their seats and classrooms in a quest for knowledge. These same teachers are using innovative ways to assess the knowledge of their students.

Please understand that while I embrace the push and development of new and exciting teaching strategies, I do not endorse change simply for the sake of change. Also, as we develop new methods we must not forget vital concepts at each grade level that are critical to a child's academic growth. Although there are many good traditional teaching methods which bring excitement to the learner, I do feel that some things need to be reevaluated and thrown out...quickly.



The intent of this article is to affirm those who are already trying innovative ideas and to encourage teachers who have not as yet embraced more effective teaching procedures. As educators, it is vital to remember that we are living in a world where videos, computer games, and movies capture the attention of students. Unless we find ways of repackaging the old product, some children may not learn the concepts we are attempting to teach.

At a recent Southern Union Education Council meeting, a presenter asked the question, "What are some factors that contribute to a successful education?" The following answer was given for everyone to consider, "A child who has learned to play the education game well." This answer brought the following questions to mind:

1. Does education boil down to simply learning how to pass quizzes and tests to please the teacher?
2. Is education just an endless game of Trivial Pursuit, fulfilling someone else's vision of what a student should know and be able to do?
3. Does education honor the student who is the best con artist in the classroom?

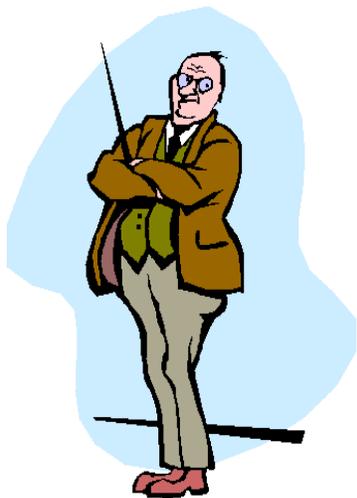
Ronald Wolk in his article, "Bored of Ed" says the following, "For too many adolescents, school falls somewhere between a waste of time and a series of humiliating failures." Unfortunately, such an observation is an indictment on the educational process, not on the student! I'm afraid many teachers



are teaching subjects, not students. In this type of practice the teacher gives reading assignments from the textbook followed by written assignments from a workbook or worksheet. A traditional test then follows in the next day or two. Using only this strategy is rote teaching that does not utilize new teaching methods.

Alfie Kohn supports Ronald Wolk's findings by asking and answering the question, "What if our kids are lucky enough to have a teacher who does things differently and makes school exciting for students? Sure, we're glad to see them happy, but part of us wonders whether they're really learning anything.

After all, learning is memorizing random facts and doing whatever you're told. You're not supposed to like it."



Today's teachers should look at their students as individual children of God and tailor the schoolwork to meet the students' learning style. Students should not be asked to digest and then regurgitate useless information. They must be challenged to do research, to grasp and understand developmentally appropriate concepts, and then demonstrate the knowledge gained using innovative forms of assessments.

Wolk continues his observation by pointing out that students who are placed in a nourishing environment and blessed with competent and caring teachers are able to overcome huge deficits. There are some teachers in the classrooms who are not providing a caring and nurturing environment for their students. In many cases these are teachers who are unfriendly to children. They expect their students to be seen

and not heard and do not encourage them to freely express their own ideas and questions. God is not pleased with such teachers. *Counsel to Parents, Teachers and Students* tells us the following: "No man or woman is fitted for the work of teaching who is fretful, impatient, arbitrary or dictatorial. These traits of character work great harm in the classroom."

I end this article with another quote from Alfie Kohn, "In response to people who say that traditional schooling has worked just fine for decades, we might ask how long they would continue to go to a doctor who says: 'I practice medicine exactly the same way I did thirty years ago—I haven't changed a thing. I don't hold with all that newfangled stuff.'"

