



Perspectives Newsletter

"Striving for Academic Excellence Through Holy Spirit Empowerment"

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RELATIONSHIPS AND THE CLASSROOM

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In August of 2003, at the National Christian Schools Leadership Symposium luncheon, Dr. Gill, National Director of the Division of Christian Education of the Assemblies of God, shared about significant people in her educational life: the sixth grade teacher who transformed her future; fond friendships with students that have changed her forever; and Christian colleagues in teaching who influenced her to go deep and wide.

There is a genuine ministry in making friends for Jesus, and there is a bountiful blessing in being friends. Christian educators have the unique discipleship privilege of influencing and being influenced by relationships surrounding the classroom. Our truest purpose is not simply to impart information but to inspire transformation. And our greatest tool in accomplishing this goal is relationships.

Students of human behavior explain that social learning, i.e., learning from an example, model, or mentor, is one of the most effective methods of teaching, especially for the transmission of character, habits, and life skills. The challenges inherent in the learning process that bring its participants face-to-face and shoulder-to-shoulder often forge a close emotional tie—that deep personal attachment called bonding. Such a life-on-life learning environment abounds in opportunities for incarnational education—living the life of Jesus in twenty-first century skin.

Relationships between teachers and students are powerful and can affect life change. A teacher who is a positive model makes an excellent example that deserves to be imitated—and the deeper the relationships, the more powerful the effect of the education.

My sixth grade teacher, Gloria Newman, took an interest in me, called out my potential, and challenged me

to go to college. I had no desire to go to college, but I thought so much of Mrs. Newman (because she believed in me) that I wanted to try. She told me I'd have to get A's all the way through junior and senior high school to make it in. And to keep me accountable, she asked me to bring every report card to her, every quarter for the next six years. And I did! I brought back all those report cards to my sixth grade teacher for examination. And what was the result? I made it into college, finished two master's degrees, and a Ph.D.—because of this mentor! Her influence, her values and her goals became mine, and because of her relationship. I owe so much to her.

Years later, as a college professor at North Central University, I was invited to speak for Alumni Days. The night before, Mrs. Newman called my parents and they gave her my number. I invited her to chapel the next day where I spoke about the way I teach and why, shared the story of the most influential teacher in my life, and then introduced Gloria Newman. As she rose to the applause of the alumni, I had an opportunity to express my deep appreciation for her influence in my life. And by the end of that message, as I was able to share the Gospel, she responded to the invitation to accept Jesus.

Teachers bless students through their relationships, and every so often, the Lord grants students the joy of blessing their teachers.

Many are **the relationships of students with students**, influencing and being influenced by one another. In a Christian school the bond between students can be strong and very effective in deepening each other's discipleship. I was educated in public schools until seminary. I'll never forget how impressed and encouraged I was the first day at Assemblies of God Theological Seminary—every professor was born again, every class began with prayer, and instead of dragging each other down, students drew each other closer to Jesus!

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My classmates were my greatest joy in seminary. We organized our own prayer meetings on Friday nights. We started a choir, put on monthly musicals in chapel. I met missionaries and pastors and those who would be. My former classmates are now seminary professors, ministers, leaders in our Fellowship, and still precious friends though scattered around the globe.

One more set of classroom relationships that can enrich our lives and deepen our discipleship are the **relationships of teachers with teachers**. When the teachers are followers of Jesus, walking closer to them helps us walk closer to Jesus!

Such campus collegiality has been a great joy to me. I have taken classes from fellow teachers, been in faculty prayer groups, lunched together often, collaborated on writing projects, and enjoyed having colleagues in my classes.

Relationships surrounding the classroom have enriched my life for years, now, and have been a marvelous method of mentoring and discipleship! The influence of Gloria Newman has paid off most in the relationships I've developed over twenty years as a teacher with my students. Not only have I contributed to their lives, but they have also contributed greatly to mine!

In fact, when I left the pastorate for the national office in Springfield, it was a student I'd mentored at North Central that became my successor! May God bless you, too, through relationships in the classroom.

Discussion Questions

How am I leveraging my life in education for the glory of God?

That is, how am I using the power of personal relationships to improve the quality of education and the quality of Life for those in my educational circle of influence.

How can I assure that I am not just teaching subjects but teaching students?

Have you experienced this paradigm shift yet? I trust we all will! It will result in value-added education, a "new kind of teaching ... with authority" [= discipleship], where the goal is not just communication of information, but life transformation.

If you have a testimony you would like to share with other ACTS member schools please send it to me via email-jawiseman@ag.org 🍏

How I Handled...

A Parent Request to Retain Her Child

A mother has requested that her daughter -- with an IEP for a rather mild disability in reading -- be allowed to repeat third grade at this, her new school. Learn how one of our Principal Problem Solvers handled this unique request.

The Problem:



New to the community, a very assertive mother came into school to request that her daughter -- who has an IEP for a rather mild disability in reading -- be allowed to repeat third grade at this, her new school. The students' grades aren't that low; neither are her test scores. The mother insists that her daughter wants to repeat the grade because school is getting too hard. She says the move to a new school is the perfect time to retain her. We rarely retain students at our school.

The Solution:

I met with the mother. Together we developed a list of pros and cons -- from her point of view and from mine. Then I met with the girl; a special education resource teacher with a great knack with kids also met with her. We helped the student develop a list of pros and cons for repeating third grade. Then I talked privately with the resource teacher. We decided that the daughter and mother had clear ideas of the impact of the decision to repeat third grade; the girl honestly seemed to want to do it and was comfortable with the potential negatives of such a decision. We went ahead and assigned her to a third-grade classroom.

The Reflection:

Only the classroom teacher, the resource teacher, the mom, the girl, and I are aware that this student is repeating third grade and, so far, she appears to be extremely happy. I talk with her frequently and she is bubbling with enthusiasm about our school, her new friends, and her third grade class. Her teacher, an experienced grade 3-4 looping teacher, told me she believes third grade was an excellent placement for this girl, and I trust her judgment. We will continue to monitor the placement as the year progresses. 🍏