

POINTS OF VIEW

Teachers break through silence of quiet child

QUESTION: As a new teacher, the most frustrating child I deal with is the quiet child. Many such children get very good grades on tests and good grades on their card. It just seems I should be doing more. What do you think I should do?

ANSWER: As a classroom teacher, I had an ample supply of quiet students. Don't worry yourself sick, but you may have to review your teaching style from what you tell me. First off, I am quite sure many reading this column were rather quiet in class, were observers of the scene, were sometimes bored, were day dreamers and sometimes just turned off on what was going on or what was not going on (good instruction). Many so-called quiet students simply never wanted to compete with the verbally hyper (sometimes obnoxious), always-on-stage students. Sometimes an average student might give a somewhat scholarly answer in

class only to be squelched by an answer by someone who had read the encyclopedia by age 10.

You seem to indicate only the same few students raise their hand and volunteer answers, and those students are the ones you continually call on. Many students interpret that to mean you have your favorites and you only call on those who will give the most in-depth answer.

Your motives may be that you don't want to embarrass the average or weak students, but you are creating an elitist classroom setting by calling on only the brightest students.

Start drawing out those students who are quiet, who you know, from their grades, are good students.

Once the average or weak students see you are working the entire classroom, they perceive you as moving into their area. Then ask the weaker students a relatively easy question on possibly a complex topic. Thank them, even if the answer is not profound. Ask



Doc Doyle

if anyone would like to add to the "fine" explanation the weaker student gave.

You are now creating a family atmosphere, rather than one in which the average and weak students are made to feel even more inadequate. Your problem is not severe, since I sense the kids like you and know you are trying as a new teacher.

Other situations where students

clam up include the class in which the teacher is never prepared. I call it the rap hour. Rather than preparing in-depth lesson plans, the teacher lets students exchange opinions all hour long in what I call the Shared Student Ignorance program. It is the teacher's responsibility to be prepared, not "blow off the hour."

Other reasons students are quiet in a class can be as simple as having had a teacher who "cuts down" kids because they have a nasty streak in them or problems at home. Teachers (and administrators) should leave their problems home.

As far as the doodlers, don't prejudge too soon. At high school class reunions I would go back to, I often talked to the quiet classroom doodlers I had.

Many of these quiet students found themselves in art, music, in writing. Some became creative engineers, research doctors, business and educational leaders.

They really weren't space cadets back in school but had dreams they seldom shared with teachers, and they often doodled those thoughts on paper at age 14 as a vision that came alive later in life.

As a final note, some children are quiet because of family or emotional problems; the extreme being the physically or sexually abused. These children should be referred to the proper authority.

It is important to identify and separate the abused quiet ones from the ones we have discussed. For the most part, however, those reserved, quiet students I knew as a teacher are doing just fine today.

James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator/university instructor, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm. To leave a message for Doyle from a Touch-Tone phone, dial 953-2047 mailbox 1856.

Handicap is more a state of mind than one of being

She was all dolled up in red stirrup pants with a long, red sweater and red shoes. He was wearing glasses — the kind with a strap — and white socks. They were dining at an Elias Brothers in Farmington Hills and getting along famously.

They caught my attention because I couldn't help overhearing their speech impediments and the clank of his walker as he returned from the restroom. I was embarrassed again, as I had been the night before, when the



Sandra Armbruster

other couple, she overweight like me.

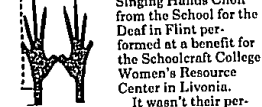
I remembered the developmentally disabled people who worked at Olga's in Birmingham, smiling and offering each other encouragement as they cleared tables, and I recalled that recently two developmentally disabled people had purchased a home in Canton.

Outside the restaurant, drivers were turning on their headlights to compensate for the night that seemed to come early with the onset again of fog. I realized that all of us have disabilities, some hidden like mental illness or difficulties at home.

But like the diners, the singers and the wait staff at Olga's, the recipe for success — and probably for happiness — is in doing the best you can with what you have.

And while we may counter a disability, such as sign language, never do we need to apologize for having one.

Dedicated to my two Sharons. Sandra Armbruster is editorial page coordinator for Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave a message for her, dial 953-2140.



Warm applause: Raised hands applauded the choir.

How terrible it would be, a colleague and I agreed the next day, not to be able to hear music.

But in the next breath we both recounted how terrifying it had been the same night, robbed of our sight by the fog and guessing our way home, she to rural areas in the west and me north to the lakes area.

We both made it home, using other skills to compensate for our loss, and the singers were at once graceful and charming, unapologetic for any deficit. Soon the diners were replaced by an

Educational philosophers forget plain English

It's no wonder people talk about a crisis in the schools. Spend some time listening to folks who call themselves educators and the reason for the crisis becomes clear. It's not the kids, it's the educational establishment.

That was driven home ad nauseam recently at the Canton Economic Club meeting, but it could have been anywhere in the suburbs.

Three educators were asked to speak about the future of education to business people, many of whom are parents. About 45 minutes later, the number crowd staggered to the door with escape on its mind.

We won't use the names of the educators in an attempt to protect the guilty, but these guys offered up the biggest pile of intellectual mush heard in recent years by the club.

If these guys had been alive and operating in the 19th century, they would have been snake oil salesmen or selling shares of stock in non-existent gold mines.

But they've cashed in on the 20th century scam, educational philosophy.

The message is really simple: We have to educate kids differently today because the jobs that were there are no longer there. Kids have to learn how to think and solve problems.

But to drag big bucks out of the suckers — taxpayers — they have to put it into that incomprehensible foreign language, educationism. These guys have been at it so long they should enroll in classes that teach English to the foreign born.

Here's a sampling. **Community-based education.** It's a fancy way of saying local schools. **Outcome-based education.** It's a



Jeff Counts

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way for educators to say to themselves: "You know, when these kids get out of school they're going to have to live in the real world and work at real jobs, and we better do something about teaching them things they'll need."

New learning. If there's new learning, then there's old learning. But then again math, English and science don't really change. Chances are the educators are trying to say that kids should learn how to use computers.

Core curriculum. It's a round-about way of saying that kids should learn math, reading and science instead of taking underwater basket

weaving.

Here's a sampling of the crowd reaction to the speeches. A lawyer: "It's no wonder kids aren't learning anything; they probably can't understand what these guys are trying to say." And just thinking about it: This comes from a man who works in a profession that isn't exactly known for getting to the point.

A homemaker and mother: "I just couldn't relate what they were saying to my two children."

A photographer and father: "Just some Bozes trying to snow us with more jargon."

And who can blame them? These are the folks who are paying the bills and are relying on educators to do something for their children. At what it's costing us in school taxes, the least we can expect is that these guys speak English.

COOKING NOTES: A recent column suggested that Gov. John Engler is selling out our state's natural resources and compared him to a bottom-feeding, trash sucker fish. A recipe for smoked sucker was sought and Craig Schmidt of Livonia came up with a winner. It's for carp, but they're bottom feeders, too. Here's the recipe: Build a fire outside with apple and oak; then find a pine board. Fillet the carp, lay it on the pine, and grill it over the fire. When done, throw away the fish and eat the board. It's an old recipe, but it'll work with Engler. Maybe we should try it on some educators.

Jeff Counts is the editor of the Plymouth and Canton Observer Newspapers who is planning a fish fry to which all educators who use jargon will be invited. He can be reached at 459-2700.

When have you seen any gay activity in public?

President Bill Clinton has stepped in a knee-deep pile of grief with his attempt to lift the ban on gays in the military. It is almost incomprehensible to think this former governor of a small time southern state, this Washington rookie, could have the audacity to try to bring our military establishment into the current decade on a human rights issue.

Apparently Bill Clinton actually believes gays are people, too, and they should have the same rights and privileges as anyone else. He sure didn't get that screwy idea from any of the fine people on the Joint Chiefs of Staff or in Congress.

The resistance to lifting the ban on gays in the military is coming from all those people who really know the havoc

gay people would cause in the military. Clinton's arguments on this matter know that all homosexual men are limp-wristed, liping sissies with uncontrollable sex drives. They are as sure of this as they are sure that all women are too emotional to make decisions and all blacks like to do nothing but tap dance and eat watermelon.

What a bunch of nonsense. Clinton's noble idea is being trampled by misconception and sexual paranoia. A common prejudice is gay people would be hugging and kissing everyone, and they would openly engage in sexual activity whenever and wherever the mood hit them. This is no more likely to happen among gays than it is among heterosexual men and women who work together.

I don't believe gays are any less discriminating than straights as far as choosing partners or opportunities.

There are gays in all walks of life, yet I cannot recall ever seeing any open sexual activity in public. I have rarely even seen gays holding hands, let alone doing anything more significant. It seems public hostility forces gays to be much more discreet than their straight counterparts. I'm quite sure there are gays in the military now who must conceal their sexual identities in fear of the same hostility.

Lifting the ban will not change the prejudice, it will merely change the policy. It is unrealistic to think that a less



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restrictive policy will cause vast numbers of homosexual people to enlist in the military, if the threat of hostility and aggression remains as prevalent. Any change which does not occur in perception and attitude will be superficial.

Unfortunately, homophobia is still a widely acceptable prejudice. The common misconception is gays are sexually irresponsible deviates who would force

themselves on unwilling straights. There is an apparent belief that gays cannot be counted on in tough situations; that they are incapable of any interaction with others of their gender without having sexual urges.

These kinds of generalizations are not very damaging and would never be tolerated if directed toward any other minority, but because homosexuality is seen as a threat to civilization as we know it, they are accepted as valid. The fact that a majority of the people hold a certain prejudice is not sufficient to excuse it.

I've grown tired of the notion that the gay military population is more likely to commit sexual offenses than the heterosexual population. One hopes the gays would be less likely, in light of some of the scandals involving so-called normal guys. The sole determinant in this matter should be conduct, not orientation.

Maybe the real question is not whether gays should be banned from the military, but should bigots be banned. Of course, then there would be hardly anyone left.

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Video on gays: This controversial video is now part of the Birmingham school system's curriculum which teaches students about people with alternate lifestyles.