

# Appreciation Through Classroom Organization

CHARLES W. GOUGET

Austin High School, Chicago, Illinois

## APPRECIATION

Few of our children will ever appreciate an orange in the same way as those of us who received an orange on our birthday when we were children. Few of us today appreciate the electric light until it becomes necessary to use a candle for an extended period of time. A healthy person seldom appreciates good health to the same degree as a person who has suffered the inconvenience of poor health first. Conveniences that are always with us are usually little appreciated by most individuals. From this standpoint we cannot hope for a great deal of appreciation among our young folks for conveniences that they have had all their lives. Appreciation seems to be a relative value which is realized most fully in terms of what we have not, rather than in terms of what we have. Herein lies one of the chief weaknesses of our educational systems, *i.e.*, the lack of individual appreciation. Instead of being something that should be sought after by most individuals, education is often accepted in the category of a bitter pill which is forced upon the individual against his will.

Because of this more or less universal attitude among students a teacher often starts his course with one strike against him, so to speak, which he may overcome in time by clever appeal and dynamic interests which eventually lead to the proper appreciation of the subject matter. However, appreciation usually cannot be achieved in a haphazard manner even though the subject matter itself

may have intrinsic interest. Appreciation implies orderliness, organization and coordination in classroom management. It is like the momentum that carries a wheel beyond dead center; it maintains enthusiasm at a high pitch. Anything that makes for physical or mental confusion will surely miss the mark of appreciation.

## APPEAL

Appeal involves curiosity plus enough latent interest to make for potential appreciation. Few people can avoid the appeal of a charming personality, a pretty picture or a pleasing tune. The number of times a book is read by different people may depend on the appeal of its cover. Other things being equal, that automobile will sell best which has the most pleasing body design.

In a like manner a course may be interesting or uninteresting according to a teacher's ability to sell his subject to his students. They must be shown objective proof of accomplishment by other students as a measure of past interest in the course. The proof may consist of a demonstration of worthwhile projects completed during the past semester. Such a demonstration may arouse a competitive desire in the new class to exceed the work that has already been done. At this point the appeal becomes positive instead of negative.

The initial appeal depends largely on the teacher's personality plus his method of presentation. He must act alive and his presentation must be objective and dynamic. Presentation by a "sleepy"

personality with a monotone voice is bound to lose attention at the outset. Any appeal that the subject matter may have within itself is immediately lost because the presentation is not stimulating enough to keep the students awake.

Teachers should remember that fundamentally human beings are objective-minded. Advertising in store windows and in catalogues and magazines should be enough proof of this truth. Who among us can resist the stimulating effect on the appetite of a colored picture of a golden brown roast and brown potatoes? Such a picture can easily form our decision to eat at the restaurant advertised. However, a decision may be reached a great deal more quickly if we happen to pass the same restaurant and see the same roast and brown potatoes in the window. The thing in the "flesh" is always more convincing than a picture or a diagram, or even the references to authority on the subject. We are beginning to recognize this fact more and more in modern visual education methods in our schools.

Often the spectacular or the unusual may command attention at the start but it will not maintain attention or interest over any extended period of time. The cover of a book may furnish the incentive to a reader to find out what is on the inside, but what is on the inside may not justify the cover or vice versa.

#### INTEREST

Curiosity captivates attention. It is the "spark" that starts the "wheels" of interest moving, so to speak. Attention may be obtained by something spectacular, but when the spectacular fades into the background, interest can be maintained only if that which follows is within the experiences of the person participating. In other words, interest involves a certain amount of understanding. If the subject matter is too abstract

or involved, or if the procedure moves too rapidly interest will sooner or later get stalled on "dead center" and the activity becomes purposeless.

From the standpoint of maintaining interest it is usually good procedure to build a course around a more immediate objective than that usually intended in the ultimate use of the material in life. In other words, all values cannot be "bread and butter values" even to the extent that they may be used at home or out of school sometime in the immediate future. Sometimes when an activity becomes too purposeful without proper development it loses its appeal, and ultimately its interest. Much human activity is merely activity for activity's sake with no particular purpose behind it. Young children seem to enjoy distributing their toys from one room to another without any serious thought of playing with them in any room. The activity of getting the toys out seems to be the pleasing part of the game. However, when the same kind of activity is required to put the same toys away to keep the house tidy the child is no longer interested in the more definite purpose. Teachers can make use of this fundamental characteristic of human nature to provide a more or less secondary purpose in the classroom work. The purpose should be immediate and as objective as possible. Such a purpose will maintain interest by activity, some of which has little actual purpose, but which helps to maintain the student's interest in the work. True interest usually results from individual or group contributions to some general plan laid out by the teacher in which the most gifted and the least gifted student may contribute according to his or her ability.

#### CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Proper appreciation in any course cannot be obtained amid noise, disorder

and confusion. Appreciation implies a certain respect for the teacher as well as application to the task at hand. Without either appreciation is almost certain to be lacking and all values disappear. Students are quick to sense frustration on the part of a teacher. Usually the teacher himself is aware of the fact that things are not moving as they should, but he may not know how to correct the difficulty. There is usually an apparent lack of interest and serious purpose on the part of the students; materials are lost frequently, and this leads to more confusion and uncertainty.

Organization is the secret of successful teaching in our modern high schools with their mass education methods. It is especially true in laboratory courses in which hundreds of materials must be used each day with a minimum of loss and breakage. Such materials should be classified, grouped and filed so that they may be found in a definite place at a moment's notice, and with a minimum of uncertainty and confusion. Uncertainty on the part of the teacher leads to disorder on the part of the students.

Every effort should be made to make a classroom procedure as calm and quiet as possible. The classroom method must be routine for young students so that each one will finally find out what part he must play in the organization set up. Each student must be responsible for the materials he uses so that the supply will not be depleted needlessly. A system of seat numbering with corresponding numbers on materials will help a great deal to fix responsibility and aid in checking materials quickly at the end of a period.

Most high school students appreciate good classroom management because they usually have a more clear idea of what is expected of them. They know the general procedure for the week; they

know their work will be checked systematically by the teacher; they know they must apply themselves to do their best work; and they know they are responsible for the materials they use.

Definiteness and system are reflected in the neatness and order in the classroom when confusion is reduced to a minimum, because many students will take pride in doing their share of the work. Pride in the classroom itself will lead to greater enthusiasm about the subject matter, with a desire to do additional work relating to the regular assignments. When a student can point to a piece of work and say, "I did that, that is mine!" he immediately becomes an integral part of the classroom set up. At this point the momentum of appreciation is having its effect.

Appreciation therefore is determined to a large extent by the ability of the teacher to know his students; to be able to provide purposeful work that they are capable of doing efficiently at a rate suitable to their particular speed; to be able to present that work in such a way that each step points in a definite direction understood by all in a well rounded systematic development.

## BY THE WAY

GERMINATION TESTS of various types of seeds are excellent winter exercises. Use blotting paper, flannel, cotton, sand, sawdust or any other suitable medium; be sure you keep this medium *moist*, but not *soaked*!

THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, also many state departments, have many free bulletins that are most useful to the teacher of biology. Write for a list of these, either to the Departments involved, or to your congressman or legislator.

FROZEN GROUND in winter is by no means devoid of life. After the surface soil is frozen hard, bring a chunk of it into the laboratory and allow it to warm up gradually. Many forms of life, which were dormant, will become active as the temperature increases.