

schools have full classes of truly gifted students, so most of us must tailor our material for small numbers or, perhaps, for talented individuals. We have to do our own planning and consult resources we find for ourselves. We must stay alert to Advanced Placement workshops, to opportunities such as Carleton College's Institute for Teachers of Talented High School Students or Macalester's Center for the Teaching of Humanities. We need to talk to colleagues in MCTE. We must add our names to whatever lists exist to offer help to one another in working with accelerated English students. This is particularly important to those of us who believe that public schools should continue to serve these talented young people.

Once again we respond to public interest. We work a little harder. We add another objective to our lesson plans. We remember, however, the ordinary, everyday kids who fill our classrooms. They, too, are special. They also are entitled to the best that we can give them, so we try to make our classrooms humane places in which all youngsters can learn.

Jean Vinton
Chairperson

TEACHING THE TROUBLED

By Carolyn L. Bell

Teaching the troubled, alienated or dropout-prone student can be the biggest challenge in the field of teaching and, at the same time, a most rewarding experience. It takes stamina, relevance, a sense of humor, and perspective.

Stamina means that every teacher who wants to be effective with troubled students must take excellent care of him or herself outside the classroom getting plenty of rest, leading a varied and interesting life, coming to class fresh with ideas are only possible when a teacher considers his or her own needs first.

I strongly recommend teachers take little or no work home. If teachers find no time during school hours to read and prepare, possibly they may be requiring too much work; they aren't going

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CALL FOR PROGRAM PROPOSALS

Donald C. Stewart, Asst. Chair, Conference on College Composition and Communication, has issued a Call for Program Proposals for CCCC's Thirty-Third Annual Meeting. Theme for the Convention: Serving Our Students, Our Public and our Profession. Place: San Francisco, California, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Embarcadero. Dates: March 18-20, 1982. Proposal forms can be obtained at CCCC's 1981 Convention in Dallas, Texas, March 26-28, or from CCCC Information Services, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, Illinois 61801. Deadline for submitting proposals: June 20, 1981.

over enough work in class, or they aren't organizing their preparation time appropriately. Research papers require extra teacher time, but they can be turned in piece by piece, day by day, with outlines, notecards, rough drafts separate. By the time the final draft is turned in, it can be read quickly. Teachers need to be at their peak of alertness and enthusiasm during school hours.

Normal adolescents bring their emotional needs into the classroom; troubled adolescents bring even greater needs with them. Each student needs to be recognized individually for whom he or she is becoming and to be appreciated for individual achievements. Teachers can encourage positive self-concept by setting a good example.

More specifically, teachers can develop interest in classroom activities through the study of relevant literature and through varied opportunities for self-expression. Teachers need to find works by writers who deal in real problems pertinent to teenage lives. Authors such as Paul Zindel, S.E. Hinton, Judith Guest and Judith Blume have written novels rich with possibility for lively classroom discussion. Fantasy by Tolkien and C.S. Lewis are popular but seem better suited for reading outside of class.

Allowing students to freely express opinions on matters such as divorce, alcoholism, and sex gives them the opportunity to learn respect for themselves, something troubled students surely need. Structure and order is invaluable in these discussions so that students learn respect for each other as well. The teacher must insist that students listen to each other courteously.

A classroom atmosphere of ease and unself-consciousness is vital. This can be nurtured through the teacher's own willingness to share his or her own ideas. However, expressing a personal opinion on matters such as abortion is not always advisable, in my opinion because some students identify very strongly with teachers and are likely to assume their opinions without fully evaluating all sides of an issue. Also, students have been known to go home and quote teachers. Parents often

resent teacher influence on controversial matters. The teacher's responsibility is to help the student discover his or her own truth, not to decide for the student what truth is.

Examining and comparing various newspapers and magazines is a successful technique for bringing relevance to student lives. The study of current issues and events can lead to student interest in developing their own paper. Writing skills grow quite naturally out of this experience. Even the most reluctant writers can review a rock concert or compile a list of current hits on the radio. Interviews or polls are fun but can be distracting to other classes and teachers, so should be done between classes or during lunch. Student papers require some time and typing but students can be very enterprising when they see their names in print, and often find unique ways to facilitate this process. The format must be kept simple. Including a sample of everyone's work, success, is of primary importance to these students layout secondary.

Another technique for developing writing skills among students classified as "troubled" is to study current poetry and to have the students write their own. There are collections available too numerous to mention, but poems should be selected that are fairly clear and direct in their themes. They should relate to matters of importance to teenagers. A few days of study and then "hands on" works best. Remind the kids that poetry need not rhyme, that it can be any length, that the object is to communicate an idea.

A teacher's sense of humor is not quoted with telling jokes or trying to be cute although sometimes both these tricks work. It means when the kids look at you on Monday morning through slits where you know eyes exist, talk all hour of their kegger parties, fall asleep in class or don't get it after three explanations, you, the teacher, remind yourself that there are three more days in the week. I don't include Friday because Friday has its special idiosyncrasies and school is probably the furthest from the minds of most of us. A sense of humor means that when a student's remarks and attitude make you wonder why

you ever went into this profession, you remember there are probably a few others who love you and need for you to be there.

Having perspective is understanding that if you know a child is abused in the home and her parents are both alcoholic, before you arrange to rescue the child and place her in a foster home, you first go through referral channels for the parents' problem. Furthermore, you seek peer support for the student through school groups or AlAnon. Your job is to teach despite the kids' problems. Teaching kids with tough lives often involves you emotionally more than teaching kids from happy homes. But, it is all too easy to take on the role of parent, counselor, welfare worker, social worker and chemical dependency counselor as well as teacher. We, as teachers, need to know where and when to make referrals and to follow up on them but not to take over the kids' lives. Timing is crucial. Some kids abuse drugs day after day but until they are ready, the only treatment you can provide is an active learning environment and the appropriate consequence if they choose not to participate.

Rewards for the teacher come when students tell you (and they will) how much you mean to them and what they've learned from you. It is possible, through your efforts, to keep troubled kids in school, to help them to become happier people, to further their progress toward graduation, and, if you're lucky, to exchange some learning along the way.

A STUDY OF THE USE OF SENTENCE COMBINING TECHNIQUES IN THE LEARNING DISABILITIES CLASSROOM

By Carol A. Bacig and
Thomas D. Bacig

The study reported here came about because a frustrated Learning Disabilities teacher was ready to try almost anything to get her junior high students to be able to write a paragraph using sentence styles more sophisticated than those of a Dick and Jane Reader, and because this teacher wanted to know if what she did was worth doing more than once.