

OPINION

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Standards make the grade

Progressive education — that's one description of the way our children are being taught at school.

But what does it mean?

When I attended university in the early '70s the professors complained that high schools were graduating students unprepared for university. Many students were forced to take remedial classes particularly in math and English. The same complaint is being made today.

This doesn't appear to be very progressive.

The recent announcement by the Ontario government to set standards for grades 3, 8, 10 and at graduation is a long overdue necessity if we are to improve the quality of education now being given.

Every business must have some standards, even if it's just to keep up with competition and our school system is no different. As Canada moves further into a global economy, the technology, products and services that we supply must be run by people at least as competent as those from other countries.

We might get by importing baseball and football players but does an American running our National Airline, as one small example, not suggest we have problems finding competent Canadians.

The teachers federation maintains that immigrant children will suffer and the diversity of students and school boards will not be recognized through standardized testing.

Many immigrants come to this country because of our higher standards, yet the above suggests the teachers federation wants to let the immigrant's abilities set criterion for education. If immigrant children have a problem, why is it when I see the list of Ontario Scholars, they are dominated not only by children of recent immigrants, but even by children who are immigrants themselves.

The school has a full time advisor who will provide counselling for students struggling

VIEW POINT

with PATRICK KELLY

with separation, divorce, victimization, aggression, death and dying. She has assistants who visit for special concerns not covered by the above. There's also a public health nurse who picks up the pieces.

Everything seems to be in place to allow our students every opportunity to get an education, yet our graduates continue to compare unfavourably against other countries. Even within our province, universities rank high schools. This may mean your child's 90 per cent average from Milton District may not be given the same consideration as someone's 80 per cent from another school.

That's not the student's fault as he was working to a different standard. It's not the teacher's fault because he was given the standards from the regional board. Blaming teachers for the state of our education system is like blaming the police for allowing criminals to go free, rather than the liberal courts and parole boards who administrate the policy set by our government.

Setting standards at least as good as the countries we compete with should be a goal and I believe teachers will then be able to show us how good they really are.

Is there really a job description for a trustee? Other than dealing with the peripherals of education i.e. bus routes, computer systems, dress codes, condom machine etc. They really appear to be a bloated cost not worth the expense. If we had province-wide standards, we could combine them all and just possibly have some real input in setting those standards.



Teach what's right and wrong

There have long been controversies in parenting literature about right and wrong techniques of discipline. The purpose of discipline is to make sure that inappropriate behaviour in children doesn't recur, as well as to teach children more appropriate ways to get what they want or to express themselves.

Recent research tells us that punishment alone is not enough. When we punish a child, the major thing he learns is how to avoid that punishment. He doesn't learn about right and wrong, morals and values ... he learns to figure out the cost (punishment) and the chances of getting caught.

Parents must also explain to a child what he did wrong and why it is wrong. It is the explanations that will give the child an understanding about right and wrong. It is the explanations that can become internalized and adopted. Children who receive explanations regularly tend to grow up to be moral as adults; children who are simply punished throughout childhood tend to grow up morally retarded.

A second factor that is important is teaching a child to apologize. Apologizing is crucial for several reasons.



PSYCHOLOGY IN THE '90S

with Dr. ARNOLD RINCOVER

First, no matter what kind of discipline you may use with your child — reprimands, sending him to his room, taking him off the playground, or grounding him — there are always social repercussions to his inappropriate behavior. There are other people effected. Discipline does not redress what he has done to the other person. He should learn that other people are effected, and that the problem cannot be corrected until he has (at least) apologized to those other people. Discipline alone does not correct the problem for those other people.

Second, apologizing forces him to think about what he did wrong, face the other person, and promise not to do it again. It is also a way to make sure he knows what he did wrong and what he could have done differently. In short, it is an attempt to ensure that the child learns something from his mistakes.

Third, there is a "cleansing" effect to apologizing. You often feel better about yourself if you face up to it, admit what you did wrong, and apologize for it. In addition, a child doesn't have to wonder what others are thinking, be afraid to see them, or be embarrassed for days. By facing up to it, tackling it head on and apologizing, he can put the episode behind him.

Fourth, it is socially attractive to apologize. People appreciate it if you feel bad about what you did — it shows you have a conscience. They like you better if you're big enough to admit what you did wrong and promise not to do it again. They feel they don't have to worry about it happening again if you regret it and learned from your mistake.

Finally, the apology must be sincere. It is not enough to say, "Go apologize to Michael" ... he'll probably just go over and say "Sorry" and walk away, with no sincerity or understanding of what he did wrong. Instead, we must explain why it is wrong, and look for some sign that it is registering, that he feels remorse or regret.

When he does go over to apologize, I'd like to see him state what he did wrong and promise not to do it again. I'd like to see him concerned about Michael's reaction, waiting for Michael to react, rather than just apologizing and walking away. In this way, I know that he feels some empathy for Michael, that he cares about the other person, which is such a big part of moral development.

Summer's no time to get caught up in catch-up

Summer has ended. Time to pack away the bathing suits, life jackets, mosquito coils, and my uncompleted projects.

Actually, I set myself more realistic goals last June, fewer than I usually do at the beginning of summer. You know, those things you figure you can get done now that summer is here.

Come to think of it, I'm not sure why I even bother to make specific plans for summer, because summers are just like weekends, they are gone even before they have started, and I am left feeling frustrated that I accomplished so little.

So what did I ask of myself for the summer of 1992? For starters, I brought two shopping bags full of unread newspapers, the ones hubby is always threatening to throw into the blue box, the ones from the pile that droops over the top of the kitchen cupboard. If a newspaper appears on our doorstep, I am compelled to browse through it. Who knows, there might be a snippet of information that will change my life. I just hope I don't end up as a little old lady hoarding hundreds of newspapers in a tiny apartment.

I am pleased to announce that I did make my way through the entire collection of yellowing newsprint, but I must also admit that I now have six bulging manila folders of clippings carefully categorized by subject and by columnist. Maybe if I spend less time organizing and more time reading, the clippings



ON THE HOMEFRONT

with ESTHER CALDWELL

would be substantially reduced. Anyhow, the clippings have travelled back home where they will yellow some more and quite possibly get read within the next year, hopefully before next summer when I, of course, will cart them back to the cottage. I know, without even looking, that some of the clippings have already made the trip to the cottage twice.

And when I am not poring over these invaluable clippings, I am reading novels, something I rarely do at home since the temptations of television forever draw me to the little screen. And here again, I fail. Alice Munro's *The Progress of Love* — "good" reading — has spent the last three summers at the cottage. I'm up to page 107.

What do I read instead? Romance paperbacks from the local library, with the alluring illustrations and tantalizing titles like *Desperado Desire* and *Lovely Lying Lips*. Ah, mindless escapism.

On the other hand, in an effort to restore the bedtime story, I did get through all 14 chapters