

Practices That Put Students Down

Some teachers intentionally like to put students down. Others may do so unknowingly. In either case, the result is always negative and includes alienation of the students, diminished self-esteem, and can contribute to a cycle of conflict that leads to escalating behavior problems. The following are examples of “put-down” practices:

The Phony Praise Approach: Praising students completing menial tasks or other mediocre achievement is saying in effect, “You can’t do anything important or well, so I’ll praise you for this.” Even slow students get the message.

The Superior Language Approach: Using words in conversation, explanations, or teacher made tests which the teacher knows some of the students do not understand. Students are too embarrassed to ask what the words mean, which results in poor communication, or test performance.

The Guilt Approach: This works best if the teacher is superficially a “good” guy/gal and not disliked by the students. The technique is to make the students feel that they have failed the teacher personally by not performing as expected when, “I have worked so hard to help you.”

The Poor Materials Approach: Teachers who want student failure may choose materials which will that result, perhaps without knowing why they made such a choice.

The Bright-Is-Right Approach: The teacher pays more attention to the high achievers in the class and make approval and liking of these students apparent to the whole group. Nothing is more effective in turning off slower students than learning that the only way they can win is the one way they cannot achieve it.

Teacher Behaviors That Inhibit Learning

1. A hurried, higher-than-normal pitched voice
2. A louder-than-normal voice.
3. A tapping foot.
4. Constantly looking at the clock.
5. Certain facial expression-frowns, angry eyes, impatience, displeasure.
6. Writing rapidly and/or illegibly on the board.
7. Derogatory comments such as, “just wasting time,” or “stupid.”
8. Poorly stated directions or assignments.
9. Not allowing students a reasonable amount of time to answer a question or explain their opinion.

Source: Teachers College Record, Author Unknown