

Grades and Learning

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Have you ever wondered why high school students get good grades? Have you ever wondered why they get bad grades?

If a student is interested, motivated, has incentive, is attentive and generally keen about their learning do they normally get good grades?

Likewise those that are disinterested, unmotivated, bored and not keen about their learning do they normally get mediocre grades?

The factors that enable a student to become interested, motivated, and attentive etc.:

The teachers' enthusiasm

The subject matter

Learning incentives

Meaningful subject matter

The teachers' style

The background subject matter

The teachers' enthusiasm

If a teacher really enjoys teaching and is genuinely excited about his subject then students will see that this subject can be enjoyable and exciting.

If a teacher teaches with passion it is evident to the students and they become curious if nothing else, why is he so excited and passionate about "geography"?

The teachers' style

Almost the same as enthusiasm, but it is also about the way the subject is approached, it is also about the methodical way the subject unfolds, the organisation of the subject matter.

Does the teacher know from experience or is it all book learning passed on, can some actual experiences come out of this?

The subject matter

Even the most boring material can be made to come "alive" and have meaning, why is the subject being taught? How is it being taught?, and who is teaching it?

Is the subject logical started at the beginning and have a logical progression?

Do the students know why they are learning it?

The learning incentives

What are these? They are the reason the subject is being taught, what does the student get by learning this subject? Is it a necessary subject for college? Does a specific grade have to be obtained in order to be accepted by college?

Is it the subject the student wishes to follow as a career?

Meaningful subject matter

This is a big deal, why am I learning this “stuff” it has nothing to do with what I want to do. Is it “pipeline education” or does it have a purpose? Mathematics can be taught in many ways, but ask a student whether they enjoy “maths”. Then ask a student working on a really great mechanical project why he has included such involved formulae. The student in the practical project has become passionate about the whys and hows, and wants to know more, the recipient on “pipeline education” will tell you he “hates maths” yet they could both enjoy mathematics if it had meaning

The background subject matter

Similar to the above, but it all has history; someone first invented, worked out or stumbled across the theory and left it for us. Physics and “Eureka!!!”, most people understand that Archimedes stumbled across the displacement of water and body volume by accident in the bath. Does the teacher bring the interest into the subject matter?

How did the Wright brothers first understand flight and “lift” by the shape of an airplane wing?

It is understanding the struggles that some of the early scientists and jokers went through to prove a point theoretically. Einstein Failed high school!!!!

Serendipity had a lot to do with early discovery; they were looking to prove one thing and gained many others completely by accident.

Maybe we are looking in the completely wrong area in our quest to modernize education, lets make teachers accountable, lets test the heck out the students to see how they are doing to see if they are learning, *never* a mention about ***“Let’s make the subject matter exciting, interesting and meaningful”***

Common sense is NOT too common, spend millions of dollars to revamp the same old subjects, stress the teachers out by “ACCOUNTABILITY”, give the Principals more autonomy. But please DO NOT GIVE THEM MORE MEANINGFUL TRAINING, that would not need checks and balances – teach teachers to have that sparkle about their subject, to teach with more meaning and ensure the students understand why they are learning such outrageous “stuff”.

What I am saying is the training, enthusiasm and subject matter (syllabus), and the way it is taught are the real bones of the problems. The syllabus is probably full of all the things it should be, but getting it across to the students in a manner that they understand and want to learn is an entirely different thing.

Now standards, our standards are appalling in Bermuda, why, well let’s look at the things

we have said, the way the subject is taught, the subject matter and the teachers' training. Teachers are required to concentrate on many things that are not part of their teaching – classroom “covers” filling in for absent teachers, taking away from their “prep” time, and prep is not all writing it is a mental thing too, ensuring one has the relevant subject matter and method of addressing the subject, so quiet time is often as essential as writing things down. It is all “prep” for the next class.

Lunch duties, when it is also necessary for teachers to have their “break” too.

Preparing for the compulsory tests which keep getting introduced, attending “flavour of the month” methods of teaching, you will all do this or do that to make the students participate – It may work for one but not the other so it cannot be dictated, teaching style is a personal thing as long as the subject is being taught and the students learn and enjoy learning.

In conclusion, all of the above is food for thought, things to get you talking, and all of it my opinion, my way to get us talking.

Technical education uses project-based methods of teaching a great deal, where the students use subject matter taught to complete a project through their research, their ingenuity, their enthusiasm. The teachers help by answering questions, asking questions and generally guiding the students in the right direction.

I believe education is primarily intended to prepare students for their life, career, and life after school, yet very little is taught about the outside of schools, very little is known about the numerous jobs available to students and very little is done to ensure students actually know what they are getting into. This needs help big-time.