

Teacher

... a short story. This one is real. And I've wanted to do this for a long time.

One of the things I'm called upon to do occasionally is evaluate the teaching of others. While the Principal generally looks after the formal evaluations, I often do informal ones every so often, just to make sure that everything is happening as it should.

That's what I'm doing now. I'm in a classroom, watching a teacher do her thing. I'm just watching, not taking notes or anything. I've been in this teacher's classroom many times.

I'm already familiar with the planning and research she's been doing. She does everything exactly as she should, working from the curriculum outcomes to plan a series of lessons to teach the content, and finding the resources needed to make it happen. She teaches both Jr. High and Sr. High classes.

She teaches a wide variety of students, with varying abilities. Some of them have difficulties. Some are the kinds of kids who often don't want to work, or to put in much of an effort. Some of them excel.

What I've noticed, every time I've been in her classroom, is that all of the students are involved with the learning. In fact, she has a gift for motivating students; she has had success with some that other teachers have gotten nowhere with. I'm not sure how she does it.

I'm watching her move around the classroom now. She knows that one-on-one instruction is effective, and she's good at it. She is always polite; her directions are clear, and her enthusiasm is infectious; she can motivate the most apathetic of students to give their best in her class. She does this as well as any other teacher I have ever seen. And unlike most of us, she never seems to have discipline problems. Even with Jr. High students.

Not all of a teacher's responsibilities are in the classroom. It is expected that teachers will also contribute to other activities in the school. I know the teacher I am watching has contributed more than her fair share of time and effort. She is enthusiastically involved with every facet of school life, and the students love her for it.

As her class finishes and the buzzer sounds, I notice that, not for the first time, students continue to stay in the classroom and finish their work. I'm seeing learning, and I know it's because of this teacher.

If I were to give this teacher a formal evaluation, it would be full of superlatives. She does everything a teacher is supposed to do, and she does it very well. She knows instinctively what the right thing to do is, and she is not afraid to ask for help when she needs to know something. It would be apparent that she has learned the lessons from Teachers' College very well. I know what it takes to become a good teacher; I've spent the last two years learning all about it, and I'm seeing it happen in front of me, right now.

But there's a problem. I can't write a formal evaluation of her performance as a teacher. She didn't go to Teachers' College. She has never had instruction on how to prepare lessons from

curriculum documents, or how to teach a lesson by seeming to be involved in the learning, or how to relate to students, or even how to use her 'teacher voice' to get the kids' attention.

She has learned all of that on her own. Bonnie is an Educational Assistant, an 'aide' who delivers a program as if she were a teacher. And she does it as well as any 'real' teacher I have ever seen.

I can't evaluate her as a teacher. But I *can* tell her how wonderful she is, as a person, a staff member, a teacher, and a contributor to our school.