

Linking Precision Teaching and Traditional Instruction: An Editorial

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TRADITION: FADED DREAMS

The professor slowly walks into the classroom, positions himself behind his lectern, and from his 1944 alligator briefcase, pulls gently out his faded ream of notes. He smiles not, nor does he acknowledge an individual student as he begins his monotone regurgitation from a class he took in 1932. The students sit stiffly and nod off here and there as the ancient lecture begins to unravel. The professor speaks in muffled whispers; almost cadaver-like, he sways and holds on to the lectern for dear life. He had *taught* this course, his course, for the same way for the last 40 years. Routine...yes, but it was his routine; it was the students' routine to write down the words that would bring enlightenment, enlightenment that never came through this ritualistic attempt to teach. For two hours the students would experience the decayed tradition which was not teaching and certainly was not learning in progress. At the end of the misery session, the professor, bleary-eyed and tired from years of death-in-life, doing time in a university prison, looks out into the class and faintly whispers, "Your exam will be next class meeting. There will be no opportunity for a retake. Study the 12 chapters and the class notes. Be prepared for

a comprehensive examination of what you have garnered from my instruction."

The day of the exam passes. Sitting behind his Victorian desk, the professor marks the papers before him. He, without emotion, strikes points off here and there and marks in his weathered gradebook the following rewards of instruction: 12 - "F"; 9 - "D"; 7 - "C"; 1 - "B"; 0 - "A". He meekly closes his grade-book, sighs, and struggles quietly to bed. Another *successful* day...another lecture for tomorrow.

PRECISION TEACHING: SAILS AWAY

The Precision Learning guide be-bops into the open learning-room. Whistling "Everything's Comin' Up Roses"... he, with trusty stop-watch in hand, readies his kids for the learnin' jam for the day. The students, alert and excited, gaze upon the guide before them and chatter among themselves, pencils in hand and ready to go, go, go! "Ready guys...let's go!" The students collectively hum and buzz in the flurry of learning taking place. The PT hive is alive today with sweet looks of delight and wonder. The minute

passes, and the guide beams as the kids record their tool skill celerations on the Chart, their report card of learning. Alive with blood-pumping enthusiasm, ready to take on anything, the kids and the guide saddle up and whiz off into the rodeo of the head, headed for a sunset ride into the land of open learning. There is no lectern; there is no alligator case of faded dreams here. Instruction is going on, learning is going on, and *real education is taking place!* The feeling of delight and wonder permeates all!

THE LINK: FIELD OF DREAMS

The shape of things to come has come. This is the end of the 20th century, and where do we find ourselves as educators, and in what shape do we find education? It is, as Richard Nixon, that sage of a rascal, said, "Quite frankly, it (education), as we know it in America, is in the most pitiful of shapes possible." How sad it is folks...how sad it is to be in this shape. Oh, there are a few diamonds among the cubic zirconias of education out there. In Alabama, of all places, there is the Center for Individualized Instruction at Jacksonville State University, with Claudia McDade at the fore. At Morningside Academy in Seattle, Washington, Kent Johnson heads into the future. Malcolm X College in Chicago has shown great strides in student learning, true learning under the direction of T. Joe Layng. There is evidence of real education taking place at the Ohio State University, with John

Cooper and others of his ilk leading the way. And there are others here and there in Utah, Montana, and Tennessee. But folks, this is just a sprinkle of true learning in a collective sense taking place. The country as a whole is suffering...no, our kids are suffering! Why?

For the past 30 years or so, there has been very little going on to assist our kids in true learning. Oh sure, there have been the experimental schools here and yon, there have been the Emersonian and Thoreauesque private nooks of learning scattered about, but otherwise the "same old-same old" has been practiced. Kids aren't learning anything of import in elementary schools and certainly not in high schools. We have become a *nation of educator babysitters*, and how sad, so very sad that is. Ogden Lindsley, one of the fathers and promoters of real learning, has often said, "the child knows best." And have we listened...have we actually attempted to grasp what those words mean in so far as promoting an educational approach that works? No! We sit on our rumpled laurels and pass kids on to others who pass kids on to others...and those kids have not, and will not, and are allowed not to learn.

So where do we go, and what do we do? Let's begin with accepting reality. The reality in education is that there exists a quagmire from which we must, as learning guides, allow our kids to escape.

Precision Teaching, Direct Instruction and Computer-Assisted Instruction have been proven to be workable learning models of true learning in action. The vicious circle game of “lecture-test” is as out-dated as yesterday’s chaperoned dates, phone-booth-stuffing, and disco dancing. In one minute, sixty tiny seconds, a universe of learning can take place in the black hole of current educational practices! SAFMEDS, timed practice sheets, computer learning units, Direct Instruction, rapid fire learning scripts... all are vehicles that will work to get our kids back on the high road of education in America! We may stumble and waffle and sway along the way to a new day in education, but time is on our side. We learn as we teach or guide others to learning how to learn. We applaud learning opportunities, we yell accolades, and we smile in the face of murky tradition!!

We will keep Precision in the classroom. We will keep Direct Instruction in the classroom. We will keep Computer-Assisted Instruction in the classroom! *We know, we know*, that when kids leave our classes, they *all have learned through these approaches!!* These kids are going to face tradition with Precision! These kids, our kids, will continue to be the teachers for others and themselves when faced with traditional approaches. All we have to do is show them the way, and folks, they, they will take upon themselves the easy chore of continuing to teach themselves how to learn.

And that is how we link Precision to Tradition!

Happy Celerating!

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**"CARE ENOUGH TO
MEASURE PRECISELY"**