



David Hicks: Commentary on Hospitality, Education History, and Classical Architecture

Lesson 1: David's Reflections on Teaching

Outline:

How does the parable of the lost sheep apply to students?

- In a class of students, the teacher is responsible to all of them and should learn to pick up on cues about their life situation.
- Showing personal interest to a student from a teacher blesses the child greatly and leads to a child being much more engaged in the classroom. David calls this attention the “Law of the Sheep” (developing a sense for who is missing in order to go find that person).
- According to David, the teacher is the most important “element” at the school before the buildings, administration, and even the curriculum.

What do you look for in great teachers?

- In a Christian school, a great teacher demonstrates a strong faith or is at least not antipathetic toward people of faith.
- Other admirable traits are cooperation, charisma, and continued growth especially with regards to questions outside of the teacher’s specific expertise or discipline.
- Great teachers exemplify interest in their expertise with a degree of enthusiasm. This is a key indicator for if teaching is “just their job” or their life and calling.
- When interviewing candidates, David says that higher credentialing does not signal better qualification for the job. Above all else, teaching requires patience and persistence with student learning.
- Great teachers are just as interested to engage with the student as they are to teach the content.
- In principle, schools should look for teachers who are not teaching classes but are making personal connections with the class.
- A good teacher is a good questioner and understands that it is the students’ job in class to speak and address the critical questions. David shares by way of example how this was done splendidly by a teacher he worked with.

What makes for a great classroom culture?

- To assess classroom culture, a teacher should examine:
 - What percentage of the time am I doing the talking? (least desirable)
 - What percentage of the time are the students talking to me? (desirable)



- What percentage of the time are students talking with one another on the subject or essential question? (most desirable)
- Teachers need to be better at criticizing and engaging themselves.
- Consider the notion that class is over not when “the bell rings” but when the teacher has assessed how effective the lesson was.
 - Have students write down (or narrate) what was discussed or learned.
 - Student evaluations are valuable assessments of teachers and how effective each lesson is.
- The classroom experience is enhanced when:
 - Teachers constantly evaluate their own effectiveness.
 - Everyone is engaged in ways characterized by charm, praise, and being “present” or together in the moment.