



The Principles of Classical Pedagogy

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Lesson 13: Docendo Discimus (By Teaching We Learn)

Outline:

Docendo Discimus: By Teaching We Learn

- The project of teaching is a way of cementing knowledge. This happens with students as well.
- Grant me keenness of mind, capacity to remember, skill in learning, subtlety to interpret, and eloquence of speech. May you guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress, and bring it to completion. –*Ante Studium*, Thomas Aquinas
 - Teaching is a way of transcending memory to deeper understanding.
- A student is an immature teacher. A teacher is a mature student.

Going Back to Go Forward

- We are seeking to go forward by recovering the ideas that never have and never will grow old.
- Keep to the ancient paths.
- Every revolution is a restoration of what is already good and known to be good.
- Sayers says we go back in the sense of revising an error when we need to get back on the path. We show students they can learn better by teaching themselves.

Docendo Discimus

- By teaching we learn.
- “Men learn while they teach.” Seneca (c. 4 BC-65 AD, *Letters to Lucillus*)
- This phrase was practiced in one room schoolhouses.
 - How did one teacher teach all of the students in one grouping?
 - The teacher would teach students in skill groups.
 - Older students learned twice when they were required to teach younger students
 - The older students learned the responsibility of giving away what they learned

We Learn – Memory

- We need to acquire deep permanent memory.
- The reality is that we forget.



- When we are full of wonder we remember things longer.
- We need to return to childhood, when you wondered.

Modern Memory Research

- There is a wide variety in forgetting, but we do. (Thalheimer)
- How do people forget? It depends on:
 - The type of material being learned
 - The learner's prior knowledge
 - The learner's motivation to learn
 - The power of the learning methods used
 - The contextual clues in the learning situations
 - The amount of time the learning has to be retained
 - The difficulty of the retention test

Lessons Learned from Modern Research

- While there is a wide variety in forgetting there is a general forgetting curve that we can predict for human beings.
- On average people do forget information in a predictable manner.
- People forget more information shortly after learning it, but gradually the pace of forgetting slows. (The Forgetting Curve, Thalheimer)
- Docendo discimus is one of the most important things we can do to prevent the steep decline on the forgetting curve.
- Learning/teaching methods matter. Other principles of pedagogy will also help with retention.
- Meaning matters! Students should understand what they are learning. If students are like a parrot reciting steps, they will not retain the steps very long.
- Retrieval practice matters. Ask the students to teach back something they learned. Ask them to describe. Tell it back and summarize it.
- Spaced repetition. This is better to be regularly woven in to teaching practices.
- Wonder, Admiration, Gratitude. The more that we can cultivate a love for the lovely, the more that students will remember what you are trying to teach.

Best Setting for Memory

- 90% of what they learn when they teach someone else (use the info) immediately.
- 75% when they practice what is learned
 - Practice skills in homework and in class.
- 50% when they engaged in group discussion
- 30% when they see a demonstration
 - We like to see things embodied where all five senses are employed.
- 20% from audio-visual



- 10% from reading
- 5% from lecture
 - Why do we lecture so much? A good lecture is great, but we don't tend to remember very easily without other pedagogies.
- If you remember best what you teach, why don't you have your students teach more?

Learning for Mastery

- Repetitio Mater Memoriae
- Memorizing by Heart
- Socratic Discussion
- Writing; Commonplace Books
- Using Multiple Senses
- Regular Review
- Teaching Others

Teaching and The Cultivation of Virtue

- Loving your neighbor.
- Freely you have received, freely give.
- Bless others.
- Do what you know. This is being responsible for the gift you received.
- Multiply your talents. Giving away is the way that talents grow.
 - There is a kind of love that animates this process, even if the student's profession is not to become a full time educator.
- Ask others to be like you (Luke 6).
 - When a student is fully trained, he will be like his teacher.
- Help others to see.
 - Show students something they have not seen before.
 - They have an obligation of experiencing the joy of helping others to see.

Practices: Peers Teaching Peers

- Narration
- Reports
- 10-20% of all instruction by students
 - Students can learn to welcome the gifts of other students as their own.
- Socratic discussion, when well led enables students to be teachers of their peers. A good Socratic discussion is a communal search for truth.
- Debates: informal and brief, formal and longer
- Recitations (poems, Scripture, passages)



- Include asking questions along with the memorization of the poem or passage.
- Students modeling for one another (*mimesis*)

Practices: Older Teaching Younger

- Older cycle teaching the younger cycle of history.
- Dramas
- Literature, Bible
- Language: Latin, Spanish, Greek
- Lead discussions
- One-to-one coaching (reading, writing, math, translation)
 - Reading Buddies: Upper school students will go to kindergarten and first grade and go through oral reading with that student. Younger students can read along with upper school students.
- Recitations (poems, Scripture, passages)
- Students modeling for one another (*mimesis*)
- The student is imitating his teacher by teaching.

Practices: Younger Teaching Older

- Recitations (poems, history songs, chants, etc.)
- Dramas
- Hymns, music, performances.
- Feats of memory!
- Share art work.
- Model wonder!