

JUN 02 1994

THE CHILD'S SELF CONCEPT
IN
RELATION TO SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

AN ABSTRACT OF
A THESIS
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
OF DANBURY STATE COLLEGE

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE

by
William H. Foote
June 1960

ABSTRACT

Education today is a great deal more than the "three r's" of a generation or two ago. Educators are interested in the whole child and in preparing him to lead a full life.

Many techniques have been developed to test a child's intelligence, achievement, and to identify his various needs. Influences on children are many and varied, all affecting his mental attitudes which in turn affect his learning ability. The child with a positive self conception tends to achieve higher levels of school performance than pupils with negative attitudes.

The writer has sought support for this thesis among a number of educational authorities. The need for such a study is evident if the teacher is to have at his command all available information to aid him in understanding his pupils and guiding them to positive self conception and the achieving of their highest potentials.

The self is the individual as he knows himself, the part called "I". He is not born with it but it develops from the moment of his birth, every contact making its mark.

In addition to using the findings of authorities to substantiate his thesis the writer conducted a study with his class, a sixth grade group, classified in their own school system as "high average," but by the Stanford scale as average.

In conducting this study the writer used the "Classroom Social Distance Scale" of the Horace Mann Lincoln School as well as an instrument which accompanies it whereby the teacher judges the group. In addition the children wrote on six different topics designed to bring out their feelings concerning themselves, their parents, teachers and friends. They also attempted to discuss goals for themselves and for the class.

The pupils in this study were cooperative, sincere, and interested in what they were doing. The writing as done by the children almost invariably fit the opinion of the teacher as gained by working with the class.

From the class the writer selected a representative group of six on whom he did individual case studies. Three of these gave support to the positive side of the thesis, three to the negative. Those who feel secure in the affection of their family and friends, in their ability to do well in most areas and who rank high on the Social Distance Scale, whose self conception is positive are average to above average students. Those who feel uncertain about their lives in general fall below average or just make the grade. Their negative self conception results in poor performance. This was true not only of those on whom case studies were done, but of the class as a whole. Naturally it was shown in varying degrees from one end of the scale to the other with certain of those who occupied middle ground showing hopeful uncertainty and performance which varied.

A certain amount of preparation on the part of the teacher is essential before he can guide his pupils to positive

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self conception. He must be aware of his own self conception. He must be aware of his own attitudes and motives. He must know what kind of teacher he is and where his weaknesses lie. In addition to his parents, the teacher is the one adult who most affects the child. It is interesting to note that children who describe a helpful teacher, list as most important, positive mental attitudes, appearances and considerate treatment rather than knowledge or ability to teach subject matter.

In guiding children to positive self conception goals must be adjusted to within a reasonable range of ability. A sense of accomplishment cannot grow without achievement.

Once all these things have been placed in proper perspective the teacher is ready to guide his pupils to achieving their fullest potentials.