

How to Teach Anything - a Primer on Classroom Management

In his 1914 book, "Teaching Gymnastics", Wellesley College professor William Skarstrom included a chapter on teaching and classroom management which I believe contains a treasure trove of wisdom and pointers for the teacher of any subject, i.e. not only the teacher of gymnastics, by any means.

Following are the last two pages from the introductory chapter, and then (with a little abridgement of gymnastics-specific material) Chapter II, presenting essentials for any teacher.

[from Chapter I]

The spirit of the work and the spirit of teaching.

Careful selection and clear definition of the exercises do not, in themselves, insure that definiteness of execution by the class which is necessary in order to produce the desired results. The arrangement and combination of movements in making up the lessons, rational progression from day to day, as well as technical skill in teaching and class management, are at least equally important in getting the work done properly. Above all, the teacher's personality — his enthusiasm, vitality, strength of conviction and purpose, as expressed through the technical resources of the art of teaching and through his influence in making the pupils apply what they learn in class to daily habits of movement and posture — will determine the degree of success of the work, here as everywhere.

To elicit the response and secure the cooperation necessary for effective work, the teacher must create a "spirit of the work," expressing itself in snappy and energetic action and cheerful alacrity. To make that spirit grow, he must imbue the pupils with his own enthusiasm and interest in the work, give them some idea of its main purpose, character and plan. Then demand, as a matter of course, the best efforts of which they are capable; insist, without nagging, that they do full justice to themselves and the work. Assume, in general, that any lapse, or failure to do good work, is due to a lack of understanding, either of a particular exercise, or of the spirit of the work. Make them feel that the teacher is not a taskmaster, but is working with them and for them.

To foster this spirit of cooperation, every teacher should give of himself freely, spend himself almost to the limit of his powers, be indefatigable in his interest in each individual. As his technical teaching skill increases he should not use it to save himself, but rather to get greater results from his efforts: better response, more vigorous and accurate execution of the exercises, deeper and more lasting impressions on the pupils. Then follow up the class teaching by admonitions, advice, help or encouragement outside of the classroom — in the examining room, in the office, on the gymnasium floor outside of class hours, in the dressing room, on the campus, yard or even street. Mingle with the pupils freely and try to get at their point of view. Enter into their interests.

Satisfy their minds, as far as possible, on matters of administration and management as well as on subject matter, whenever there is frank, honest questioning or misapprehension. Do not keep aloof. Treat them as fair-minded beings and take them into your confidence as far as possible. Meet them on terms of human equality at all times; make them feel that the classroom discipline and formal relations are merely devices necessary to facilitate instruction and make possible cooperative action in which each has an equal share. Such a spirit will always be appreciated by a class and insure the hearty support and willing cooperation of a majority of its members.

CHAPTER II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

1. SOME ESSENTIALS FOR SUCCESSFUL TEACHING.

The elements of strength and success of a teacher lie within himself rather than in external conditions and circumstances. They are dependent largely on inherent qualities which are not to be acquired by imitation of someone else, or by trying to live up to certain rules or formulas. Style, method, system, while of some importance, are not essential. Good results may be obtained in various ways, if fundamental principles are adhered to. While some successful teaching is achieved by untrained teachers who instinctively or by long experience have found and fol-

lowed main principles, or who make up for lack of technical skill by enthusiasm, devotion and energy, it must be admitted that a great deal of mediocre work is done which might be vastly improved if the teachers were better trained, not only in the sciences on which the work itself is based, but in the art of teaching it. Here, as everywhere else, there is the same difference between skilled and unskilled work, between crude if ever so honest efforts and finished workmanship. Even the born teacher, the natural genius, may profit and the quality of his work be improved by a study of principles and technique, with a view to making him a finished artist; while those who are more modestly equipped by nature may gain proficiency and facility by the same process.

Learning by practice and experience, while perhaps the most effective way, is not always sufficient. It is costly, severe and often slow in its results. Many mistakes and trials may be avoided by understanding from the outset certain general principles which underlie all teaching and certain details of method and procedure peculiar to our own work. Proficiency is never attained without experience, but theoretical considerations and careful, intelligent observation may enable us to derive a larger measure of profit from our own experience, and to increase it considerably by turning to profitable account the experience of others.

Three things, then, are indispensable for complete success: 1. Natural aptitude and a strong personality. 2. A study of principles and methods with observation of their practical application. 3. Actual practice and experience in teaching. Any one or two without the other (s) will leave something to be desired; too great reliance on any one with neglect of the others will militate against the fullest measure of success.

Personality of the teacher. The first of these essentials includes the character, the living power, keen insight, resourcefulness, zeal, faithfulness, energy, enthusiasm, willingness to give of himself without stint — in short, all those qualities, ideals and habits of the teacher which taken together make up his personality. These cannot be communicated or subjected to rules and definitions, being infinitely varied and subtle. The qualities which make one teacher successful may not be the same as those which make another equally strong and successful.

Perhaps in no other calling does personality play such an important role as in that of teaching. In most occupations the efficiency of the worker depends mainly on his special physical and mental qualifications, the dealings between people which are involved being related to material things.

But with the teacher, as with the minister and physician, the working material itself is the human mind, and here the influence of personality finds its greatest scope. This is especially true in gymnastics because of the intimate relation and close association between teacher and pupils.

Here, even more than anywhere, it is as much a question of what a man is, as what he does. Among the personal attributes which make for the success of a teacher are: patience, cheerfulness, good temper; keen sense of humor, ready wit, a level head; sympathy, sense of justice, self-control, leadership; vitality and a fairly good physique; quick eye and ear and a good voice. Many of these, if existing in an undeveloped state, may be cultivated and made stronger by resolute desire and effort of will, and by creating as far as possible an environment favorable for their growth from within. Some of them may also be developed by formal training.

Knowledge of principles and methods. While the personality of the teacher — the sum total of his natural endowment, his education and general experience — is perhaps the most important single item on which successful work depends, his technical training and teaching skill constitute an almost equally essential part of his equipment. Such technical training should include a study of the main anatomical, physiological and psychological facts on which the selection, definition, arrangement and progression of the work are based; a working knowledge of the general principles of all teaching, sufficient to an understanding of the little peculiarities of human nature that are constantly met and have to be reckoned with, serving to warn him against and enable him to avoid many pedagogical pitfalls and difficulties — faults of commission or omission which experience has shown to be conducive to ill success. Along with this general theoretical training should go a study and practice of the subject matter to be taught, with a view to attaining at least moderate ability and skill as a performer, and insuring an ample, varied and accurate knowledge of the material. Familiarity with the subject matter should be much wider than the exigencies of any particular class-teaching at any given time might require, so as to have a reserve for emergencies, to allow for leeway and loss in transmission, and in order to give the teacher a sense of security and confidence. It will enable him to meet unexpected contingencies, such as stating reasons for a given procedure, or the preference for one rather than another. Finally, the earnest and most painstaking efforts of every prospective or actual teacher should be given to a consideration of the devices by which instruction in this particular work is made effective, the methods used

for accomplishing the results that the work stands for: the use of language, voice, demonstration, etc.; in short, the technique of teaching gymnastics.

That any special technical training is required, or, indeed, that there is any such thing as a special technique in teaching gymnastics, is hardly realized by the public or even by teachers of other subjects. This is not to be wondered at, considering that it is not so long since the chief qualification of a teacher was considered to be skill or reputation as a performer. Until recently very little emphasis has been given to the technique of teaching, even in normal courses. And this in spite of the fact, attested by teachers who have had other experience, that gymnastics is one of the most difficult subjects to teach, requiring as it does absolute attention, vigorous effort and intelligent cooperation of all the pupils at the same time.

Although some crude teaching still passes muster — either because the public has not yet learned to judge the work critically, or because the supply of well-trained teachers has not yet caught up with the demand, or because, even when poorly taught, the work may still yield some obvious, beneficial results — nevertheless the demand for skilled teachers is growing and the standards of professional competence are rapidly advancing. In the normal schools more and more attention is given to courses on the principles and technique of teaching and greater facilities are offered for practice-teaching. To qualify as teachers or supervisors in public schools candidates are subjected to practical tests in teaching and criticism as a part of their examination. Other things being equal, the technically best-equipped teachers gravitate toward the most desirable positions and so compel those less thoroughly trained to seek opportunities for study and improvement, as witness the large and constantly increasing attendance at summer schools and special courses. All these factors are making for greater efficiency in teaching, for greater effectiveness of the work with correspondingly increased appreciation and recognition.

In attempting to analyze the elements or factors which go toward making gymnastic teaching effective or the reverse, and which may be properly included in a study of the technique of teaching, we are at once confronted with the difficulty offered by the diversity of conditions under which the work is taught, the varying emphasis on the objects aimed at, and the consequent variations in the style or type of work called for. Rules of technique and method might lead to a stereotyped, lifeless style of teaching, a feeling that only one way is right and all others wrong. To discuss in a comprehensive and detailed manner all possi-

ble variations would be too great and difficult an undertaking. Not until we can foresee and provide for all possible conditions and discuss methods in the light of a wide experience of each of these conditions; not until we possess a complete knowledge of psychological and physiological laws, can final, adequate rules be formulated. Such a time will probably never come, nor would it be desirable, as that would imply limitation to personal initiative and growth. It will, therefore, be necessary to limit the discussion to certain topics or phases of the subject, each embodying a few principles and technical features which are applicable in greater or less degree to all kinds of work...

2. CONTROL AND CLASS MANAGEMENT.

Some means by which control may be maintained.

Whatever may be the style of work taught, or the conditions under which the work is carried on, or its aims and objects, the prime requisite for successful teaching is that the teacher at all times have the class well in hand, be the undisputed leader and the master of every situation. Class control and management are at once the test and the result of the teacher's personality, his understanding of human nature, his ability to adjust himself to conditions as he finds them (or better yet, his ability to create conditions favorable to the work), and his correct application of the principles underlying the work and the technique of its teaching. Control may sometimes be attained only after a struggle (of wits) in which the new teacher is compelled by the class to prove his right to leadership. But even the best-behaved class will, at the outset and from time to time, often in subtle and apparently innocent ways, put the teacher to the test, and if the latter fails to measure up to the proper standard, if he is found wanting in the qualities of leadership, the class will gradually, but inevitably, drift away from habits of order, discipline and good work to slackness, disorder and mischief. Or the interest in the work may fail either to materialize at all, or, if existing at first, to be sustained.

How to secure and maintain control is a question the full answer to which cannot be given, at least briefly, as it involves everything: personality of the teacher; interest of the class in the work, aroused and sustained by proper adaptation, progression and presentation of the work to the class; the degree to which the teacher is able to appeal to the various motives and incentives of the class or individual members of it; the teacher's will power and vitality generally, and at any given lesson; his ability to "get in touch" with the class, to establish and maintain the right personal

relations; his attention to all the technical details of teaching.

Incentives. Some teachers control largely by "exercising their authority," by virtue of the awe or fear they inspire, by constantly holding the whip of compulsion over their pupils. This form of appeal is the lowest and should never be resorted to, except once in a while in the case of refractory individuals after all other means have failed. It is the wrong kind of discipline — negative, or "discipline from above" — demanding abject obedience and creating a most undesirable mental atmosphere. Other teachers control their classes through the respect and affection they are able to inspire, by imbuing their pupils with a desire to do their best in order to please the teacher and gain his approbation; others again because they are able to arouse the sense of duty in their pupils, inducing them to try to do the work well because it is worth doing, or simply because it is a part of their obligation to the institution; or by appealing to intelligent self-interest, to a commendable desire to derive the greatest possible benefit from the work; still others chiefly by communicating to their pupils their own enthusiasm and interest in the work and making it truly enjoyable for its own sake. All these avenues of appeal, except the first, are useful and legitimate means of maintaining control. The most successful teachers are those who know how to play upon these different motives and incentives of the class most skillfully, in the right proportion and at the proper time.

Will power. One of the essentials in getting and keeping control of a class is a strong, well-trained will and a positive, determined mental attitude on the part of the teacher. Even when the conditions under which he is working are in the main favorable, he usually has to overcome the natural inertia, the disinclination to vigorous mental and bodily exertion on the part of the class (and often of himself). This is particularly apt to be the case in the beginning of the lesson, at the first "plunge" into the work, before the class has become "warmed up" to it. But it is also true to an almost equal extent throughout the lesson. To have every member of the class execute each movement in the best possible manner, in a way to accomplish the purpose for which it is given, in perfect unison, with the utmost effort and painstaking care, whether at the time agreeable or not, requires a cooperative interplay of will power between the teacher and the class which taxes the strength and tests the mettle of both. Such combined exercise of the wills of the leader and the group, the leader furnishing the initiative, the impetus and the stimulation, is the essential feature of all cooperative action. It does not mean slavish obedience,

the subjection of the pupil's will to that of the teacher, but rather the guidance of the former by the latter in the accomplishment of some definite, desirable object. The work, the duty, or the cause is the real driving power of both the leader and the group. In this sense obedience — willing cooperation on the part of the pupil — is really induced exercise of the pupil's will and may justly be considered effective in training of the will. At any rate, cooperative action of this sort, initiated by the teacher, and comprising, as it does, both positive effort and inhibition of undesirable action by the pupil, is real self-discipline. It should serve to illustrate voluntary obedience to law and constituted authority, the self-restrictions imposed by an intelligent and worthy plan of life and readiness to accept the suggestions and guidance of a trusted leader. All these phases of self-discipline are necessary in any true democracy and must be practiced by every good citizen. "The habit of obedience to law, of bringing our actions into harmony with it, is one of the first conditions of an orderly and well-disciplined life." (J. G. Fitch.)

The degree of willing cooperation on the part of the class will then be the measure, for one thing, of the teacher's will power. This in turn is expressed through his self-control, his strength of purpose, and his ability to liberate energy. It will vary with his physical condition, with his mental state, his ideals and temperament. Undue fatigue, emotional disturbance, even atmospheric conditions may blunt the keen edge of his will power and be reflected by slackness or poor quality of work on the part of the class. Will power in the teacher will show itself among other things by his self-possession, by a firm, decided, animated attitude, manner, tone of voice; the lack of it by a nervous, irritated, or uncertain manner, hesitation in voice and bearing, aimless movements, superfluous speech, nervous mannerisms, etc.

A quiet but determined manner, an air of expecting to be listened to attentively as a matter of course, being an expression of the real feeling that such is the case, will go a great way toward securing that willing obedience which is the first requisite to cooperation. On the other hand, "obedience cannot be gained by demanding it (in words or by gestures which are supposed to be manifestations of will power), or by explaining its usefulness, or by entreaty, or by threat — all these are signs of weakness and lack of will power." (Fitch.)

Interest. Getting and keeping in touch with the class. Class control is very much dependent on the interest of the pupils in the work. When this is lacking, control can only be maintained through "the exercise of authority" in an

undesirable way. Interest in turn depends on the proper adaptation, character, planning, progression and presentation of the work. It also depends on the teacher's ability to get in touch with the class, to establish and maintain the right mental relations, to infuse into the class his own interest in the work. While the teacher's personality is a large factor in this as in everything, a judicious "introduction" of the work to the class is of great help. A certain amount of explanation by the teacher of the nature, plan and purpose of the work is always possible and should be given at the first meeting of the class. The form and comprehensiveness of such a preliminary statement will vary with the age of the pupils, their probable attitude toward the work, and the conditions under which it is carried on. At such a time, after having stated briefly and clearly the objects of the work as he conceives them and what kind of work in his judgment will best attain these objects, the teacher may in a straightforward, simple way ask the pupils to give him their cheerful cooperation in his efforts to organize the class and to drill it in those details which are necessary to enable him to handle it like a well-adjusted machine. He may appeal to the group spirit by pointing out the necessity of each member doing his best in order to insure unison, good quality and finish to the work of the class as a whole. He may suggest the advantage of going slowly in the beginning so as to master fundamental details before attempting more rapid and complex work, with a view to progressing farther and faster in the long run. In conclusion, he may show the importance of starting and finishing all exercises in a good fundamental position. Then begin the lesson by practicing this as an exercise in response to the signal "Attention!" and in a way to make the contrast between this fundamental and the relaxed position as striking as possible...

The extent to which the teacher can in this way prepare the minds of the pupils and enlist their cooperation beforehand will determine the character of the work and the method of teaching, at least in the beginning. If the age and intelligence of the class and its serious interest in the work warrant it, he may, for example, find it feasible and wise to drill on some fundamental details, to demand quick response to signals (commands) and a fair degree of precision and unison in the execution of a few simple, definite movements at the first lesson. If, on the other hand, the class is of an age or mental attitude in which that kind of a lesson would fail to be appreciated and arouse interest, because its purpose could not be readily understood, it would be wiser to spend less time on details, to use only the less definite types of exercise and at once to strive for

continuity, swing and go. Such work would be more likely to catch and hold the attention of the pupils, to call forth their most vigorous, even if crude efforts, and to produce the immediate and obvious organic effects which they are capable of appreciating. In most cases, it will probably be best to mix the two kinds of work in varying proportions, but with the less definite exercises predominating. If this is done judiciously, beginning and ending the lesson with lively exercises, the teacher will at once get in touch with the class, there will be no slackening of interest and therefore no danger of loss of control.

3. DISCIPLINE AND ATTENTION.

Discipline. Among the most fundamental and obvious elements or expressions of control are orderly behavior, decorum, cooperation and attention to duty — collectively included in the term discipline. In the best sense, discipline is positive, implies organized, well-ordered group activity. It involves a keen sense of responsibility of each member of the group, requires his alert attention, quick thinking and prompt action in relation to and for the success of the group action. Ideally, it is the resultant of the self-discipline of each individual and is then essentially a matter of attention based on interest. This term also implies inhibition and repression, as well as measures producing these. The last is really a misuse of the term. Poor discipline in teaching means imperfect control and slovenly, ineffective work.

With favorable conditions, such as good morale and traditions of the institution, a recognized standing and good backing of the work and the right relations between teacher and class, discipline is rarely a problem. Good discipline is then a matter of course, the natural, normal condition of things. It is insured and maintained by giving the class abundant work requiring the constant exercise of the mental and bodily powers of the pupils, and of such a character as to arouse and keep their interest. Then it needs no mention or sign of conscious management on the part of the teacher. And yet, the maintenance of such a desirable state of things requires his thoughtful consideration and watchfulness, his constant self-control, ready resourcefulness and good judgment. There will always arise occasions, even in well-behaved classes, when something occurs which, if not properly met, might lead to a breach of discipline and at least temporary loss of control. It may be some little slackness in the beginning of a lesson, insufficient alacrity, some thoughtlessness or excessive high spirits on the part of one or a few pupils, of no great harm or consequence in itself, but apt to lead to other things or to

be "catching." All such little deviations from good order and discipline, especially such as are out of keeping with the spirit of the work, must not be allowed to pass without notice, lest they grow and multiply. A word, or even a look, not necessarily severe but sufficient to indicate that the incident has been observed and disapproved, may be sufficient. If any considerable number have been guilty, a few words of censure, spoken calmly and without any show of personal annoyance or resentment, may be advisable, especially if the pupils are very young. If really flagrant breaches of discipline should occur, more vigorous measures may be necessary, such as sharp reproof of individuals before the class, conveying the idea that the offense has been against the class, the imposition of a suitable penalty in keeping with the customs of the institution, loss of privileges and even exclusion from the class for the time being. Perhaps the best and most effective way in such cases is to ask the offending pupil to see the teacher after class. Then the matter can be talked over quietly, the reasons for and the circumstances leading up to the offense inquired into, and the right kind of appeal or pressure be brought to bear. In this way a deeper and more lasting impression is made and repetitions are less likely to occur. The moral effect on the rest of the class is also considerable.

If a whole class show a spirit of mischief or antagonism to a new teacher, he can in most cases conquer it by a fearless and apparently unconcerned manner on noting the first signs; then, perhaps, by reprimanding one or two in quiet tone, but with a look and manner conveying the impression of unlimited reserve power, of perfect understanding of the situation and ability to deal with it. In the meanwhile he may decide in his own mind what to do in case of further trouble; then, if it seems unavoidable, make the issue in a few well-chosen words, and "land hard" on the first offenders, using whatever legitimate means he has at his command. If possible, meet the issue smilingly, but in any case with firmness and determination. Above all, give no sign of being disconcerted or irritated, as that is exactly what a mischievous class desires. When a class finds that a teacher is fearless and cool, seems to know his business and to understand the mental workings of the group and of every individual, it soon settles down to a businesslike attitude. When two or more individuals habitually incite each other to mischief or inattention, separation may be all that is necessary.

Under all circumstances, it is essential that the teacher keep his temper and administer reproof or punishment in a manner free from any suggestion of personal animosity. While a show of righteous indignation or even wrath may

on rare occasions be justifiable, and very effective, it is safest to avoid any explosive reaction, any violent collision with individuals or class. It is always desirable to control by gentle means as far as possible and to keep the idea of compulsion by severe measures in the remote background. Make the pupils feel that you take for granted cooperation and good behavior on their part and treat any small lapse with surprise and disappointment. Do not be too quick to make a rule or a threat, especially if enforcement or fulfillment would be difficult. But if for any reason compelled to make the issue squarely, then stick to it to the bitter end (providing you are in the right), no matter what trouble or discomfort may grow out of it — to yourself as well as to the pupils.

The manner of showing disapproval is of great importance. This applies to the execution of an exercise as well as to the general behavior of the class. Reproof, reproach or punishment of any kind is a matter requiring much pedagogical tact and judgment. It should always be spontaneous, frank and impersonal. Whenever possible without spoiling the result, inject a little humor into the situation. This is often more effective than sternness, especially in minor matters. It gives the class the feeling that the teacher can easily handle any situation, has plenty of reserve power, does not criticize or censure from a spirit of pedantry or fussiness and does not take himself too seriously. But be sure that the humor is of a kindly nature and spontaneous. Avoid sarcasm of a biting, and especially of a sneering kind. It is sure to be resented, as it always means that the teacher is taking advantage of his position in an unfair way.

Knowing when and how to express disapproval and above all, not overdoing it, coupled with judicious commendation for good work and a cheering, encouraging, friendly attitude at all times, is one of the chief factors of success in maintaining discipline and at the same time keeping on good terms with the class. Another is to furnish an abundance of hard, but interesting work. No general rules can be laid down, except that of being just and impersonal. Assuming as far as possible that minor infractions are unintentional lapses, due to momentary forgetfulness or inability promptly to change from a state of playful excitement or inertia to one of serious attention and alacrity, rather than to willful desire to annoy or reluctance to work, and treating them as such, will usually be the best way. But guard against letting the class think that even little things can pass unnoticed or will be accepted — that the teacher is "easy." "Nip things in the bud!" Always show gentle but firm and unmistakable disapproval of the least breach of

discipline, slackness, mind wandering or whatever the case may be, and so make the possibility of really serious trouble increasingly remote and out of the question.

Attention. While coercive measures and repression may sometimes be necessary, they should only be applied to individuals in order to support discipline. This may be said to represent the negative side of class control. Securing and maintaining attention constitutes its positive or active phase. Negative discipline implies inhibition or repression of impulses and actions subversive of good order and the right conditions for work. Attention — in the ordinary sense, and also including all that is implied in such terms as alertness, alacrity, response, readiness and willingness to think and to do — is an essential feature of the work itself. Lacking this positive, controlled, fixed and willingly given attention, the work is but a sorry spectacle, devoid of life and interest, perfunctory, listless and of doubtful value, even though there be perfect decorum and a kind of submissive, passive "pseudo"-attention. When active attention has been established and every individual is ready and willing to work, understands what to do and how to go about it, there will be no need for repressive measures, no call for the exercise of authority to maintain discipline. This is but the application of the common principle of forestalling and inhibiting undesirable action by inducing right action, of diverting aimless, useless or mischievous impulses and energy into useful channels, into purposeful activity. It will readily be seen that not only control but the success of the work from all points of view hinge on the teacher's ability to stimulate and hold this active, directed, fixed attention. How to focus the mental processes of a number of mind-wandering, indifferent, inert and perhaps even antagonistic individuals, or a lot of excited, rollicking, contending, play-fighting, wildly shouting young savages, as the case may be, upon the serious, orderly, formal work in hand; how to keep these various minds steadily and unswervingly applied to definite, discriminating, vigorous efforts, the purpose of which may be only vaguely understood and the incentive for which is sometimes distant and more or less abstract, is often a task of considerable magnitude and difficulty. It taxes the vitality, the strength of will, the natural and trained powers of leadership of the teacher and all the technical resources of the art of teaching. Indeed, this is the very essence of the art of teaching.

While it would be futile to attempt to enumerate and describe all the factors which enter into this problem, all the means which may be legitimately used to secure, stimulate and hold attention, or the mistakes which lead to a loss of it, a few suggestions at this time may be appropriate

and helpful as having a bearing on class control. In the detailed discussion of the technique of teaching, later, the subject of attention will be often referred to and always borne in mind.

The beginning of the lesson is usually the most difficult and critical time in all respects. Especially is this true when the pupils enter the gymnasium in an informal manner and are allowed to run around and amuse themselves in any way they choose for a varying length of time before the lesson. When control becomes difficult on this account, it may be feasible and wise to curtail their free use of the place to some extent, as in the use of apparatus, balls, etc. But even so, it will hardly be possible or wise entirely to curb youthful spirits by negative means — restriction, repression, interdiction. It would be better not to allow them on the floor at all before the lesson, but to keep them in the dressing room or hall until all are ready, and then to march them in in good order. This is done in many schools. On the other hand, when a fairly long time is allowed between periods, it becomes a question of whether it is not better to let them romp and play on the gymnasium floor than to try to keep them quiet and orderly in a crowded and often poorly ventilated dressing room. The former is probably preferable and in many places other than schools may be the only feasible way. In such cases it will usually take a little time and several steps to get the class lined up and ready for work.

It would be unreasonable to expect an instantaneous change from the varying mental states of hilarity, excitement or inertia to one of quiet but alert attention. Often the teacher's voice may not be adequate to arrest and change the condition, of things. A bell or a whistle may be necessary as a preliminary signal. A class may be trained to subside into quiet and even silence on this signal, and then to form promptly on the command "Fall in!" or "Line up!" Or this may be done without any special signal.

In any case, it will be worth while to drill a class in prompt response to whatever signal is given, and to line up in some agreed-upon manner with the utmost alacrity. Try to stimulate their pride and spirit of emulation in this respect; make each individual feel responsible and loth to be the last, or the cause of delayed and poor alignment. It is wise to allow a little time for this preliminary formation before calling the class to attention by the formal signal. It paves the way for and insures a more perfect response to the first "Attention!" But make constant efforts to shorten this time. With young pupils, and occasionally with older, actually timing this manoeuvre may prove a good stimulus. Even telling a class (when the first attempt has been unsat-

isfactory) to break ranks, scatter and try it again, may be effective in the beginning, or later when there is sign of slackness. But this expedient might not be safe if used too often, or with classes difficult to handle.

Having in an informal way got the class under partial control and arranged in an approximately correct formation on the floor, try to get silence and readiness for the real beginning of the lesson by standing still before the class, running the eye along the lines and indicating by look, bodily attitude, slight gesture or even a brief admonition, that something is about to happen; then say "Attention!" in the most effective voice and manner possible. This does not mean in a loud voice, necessarily. It may be done that way, or more quietly, but always in a tone and with a manner indicating force of will, energy and reserve power, as well as expectancy of instant response. At the same time there ought not to be too strong a suggestion of masterfulness in a personal way. Rather try to convey the idea of something more than that, of a motive power which is compelling and binding on teacher and pupils alike, namely the duty, the work which both are to accomplish. This applies to the giving of all signals (so-called commands). To convey this idea more clearly (without saying anything about it) and at the same time to help, by suggestion, to get a satisfactory response to the signal "Attention!" it is well for the teacher himself to respond with the utmost vigor (in unison with the class, not ahead of it) by assuming the fundamental gymnastic position suddenly, and retaining it rigidly for a moment before proceeding further. If the response of the class is not satisfactory, if it is lacking in promptness and does not show a marked contrast to the position of ease, then give "At ease!" and repeat, having first made an admonition, if necessary. After a moment's immobility and perfect silence, proceed briskly with the next step in the lesson — usually the alignment. Or, if there are any announcements or special statements to make, do so at this time. But first give the signal "At ease!" then begin to speak immediately after this has been properly responded to. This procedure insures their attentiveness while relieving them from the strain of holding the fundamental position for a considerable length of time. On the other hand, it avoids an inevitable lapse from the fundamental position, due to fatigue or forgetfulness, which is very undesirable from a pedagogical standpoint. Whenever during the lesson there is an intermission or lengthy explanation, the class should be formally relieved from the fundamental position and allowed to stand at ease, though not relaxed to such an extent as to mean slouching or poor posture.

Very often control is lost, in a small way, at least, by failing to check the tendency of most pupils to try to adjust their places in the line after attention has been called. It usually represents good intention, perhaps a mistaken idea of what is wanted, an imperfect understanding of the significance of "Attention!" or at worst a belated attempt to do something which should have been done before. In any case, it is obvious that the signal has failed to produce the desired reaction, and such failure should not be accepted or countenanced. The acceptance of every such failure, no matter what the reason, weakens the teacher's influence and class control, as well as the pupils' habit of active, concentrated attention and readiness for further action. In this particular case it also tends to confusion of ideas. Make the distinction between the signals "Attention!" and "Right dress!" clear, and insist that each be responded to in the right way and at the right time.

When speaking to the class, either for the purpose of instruction, description of an exercise, comment or admonition regarding its execution, or on any other matter, it is important that the teacher stand in a place and at a distance from which he can be heard and preferably seen by all. He should face the class and keep his eye on all parts of it. A platform may be useful for this purpose but is not always necessary or even convenient. Be sure that voice and enunciation are such that the pupils farthest away are reached. Guard against the not uncommon, usually unconscious, mistake of addressing those standing nearest.

Do not begin to speak until all are quiet and attending. If inadvertently failing to wait, or if a few pupils become inattentive, and especially if any one speaks or otherwise disturbs the absolute quiet, stop immediately and abruptly, in the middle of a sentence preferably. Then by look, gesture or quiet verbal reminder, gain or restore complete attention. Do not resort to vehement demands for silence and attention or show any signs of irritation. If reproof seems necessary, administer it in a calm, self-controlled manner, then resume speaking as if nothing had happened. If the teacher goes on speaking and accepts inattention and even conversation from a part of the class, this part will grow larger and larger, and soon the majority will feel that strict attention is not expected. This is one of the most common ways in which the teacher's hold on the class is weakened. Moreover, the pupils are encouraged to form habits of discourtesy and disrespect.

Interest in the work is an essential factor in securing and holding attention. To arouse and sustain interest, the work must be adapted to the needs and abilities of the class. It must meet in the first place those needs of which the pupils

are aware: the needs for exercise, for bodily action which will produce the immediate organic stimulation and the exhilaration or sense of well-being associated with it. The work should also be of such a character that it tests and makes full use of the various abilities already possessed by the class, as regards strength, agility and skill, and at the same time is most conducive to perceptible improvement in these directions. On the other hand, it must be simple enough to enable the average pupil to do it reasonably well, thus giving him a sense of satisfaction and encouragement. The proper selection, grading and adaptation of the work must be backed up with good presentation, animated, inspiring, technically correct teaching and rational progression. The class must be made aware of progress in some way. It is well, for example, when introducing a new type of exercise, or a new combination, to indicate by a few words its purpose, its relation to similar exercises with which the class is familiar — wherein it differs, what constitutes the increased difficulty, or its particular effectiveness, what final form or type it leads up to, etc.

Having aroused the interest and gained the confidence of the pupils, the teacher can gradually modify their mental attitude toward the work, lead them on to different and broader points of view, indicate needs of which they were not aware at first, and arouse interest in work suited to those needs. This enables the teacher to appeal to motives and furnish incentives which previously would not have been available or effective. Also he can make the pupils appreciate phases and qualities of the work which require a certain amount of progress and training to be understood and valued. Thus a skillful teacher may continually open up new and varied lines of interest, stimulate a constantly increasing appreciation of the value and beauty of the work, make it more enjoyable and so secure the attention and willing cooperation of the class.

The technical side of teaching also plays an important role in maintaining attention throughout the lesson. The teacher must have facility and be sure of himself in such technical matters as the presentation of exercises, the giving of signals to start and stop movements or to handle the class generally. He should know how to describe and demonstrate the exercises in a lucid, concise way, with as little loss of time as is consistent with clearness and vividness. The signals should be suitable, simple and self-explanatory as far as possible; properly intoned and inflected, carrying a strong suggestion of how the movement should be done; with sufficient pause between the preparatory and final parts to insure perfect unison in the execution. When the exercises are done rhythmically, he

must be able to keep the class together, "head off" an impending break of unison, guide and modify the rhythm in a way to elicit snap, speed, accuracy and steadiness of movement and keep it from becoming mechanical, oscillatory, slovenly or listless. He must at all times be ready and willing to exert himself to the utmost and be able to keep a clear head while trying to do several things at the same time: stimulating, admonishing, warning and correcting in a general way, constantly moving about between the lines or in front of different portions of the class, observing everything in a systematic way, helping by example, word or touch first one individual or group, then another; all the while keeping his eye and ear on the class as a whole, marking the time, steadying the rhythm and from time to time vigorously participating in the movement in order to stimulate, through suggestion and example, to greater effort and attention to details in its execution.

Special ways of stimulating a class. Dullness and poor response, restlessness and inattention, are usually traceable to the non-observance by the teacher of pedagogical principles and technical details of teaching, or else to some shortcoming or peculiarity in his physical make-up or manner. But these things may occasionally be due to entirely extraneous causes, such as cold, or humid, sultry weather, "spring fever," insufficient light, the effects of a vacation just ended or impending, excitement about something that has happened or is going to happen outside of the class, and having nothing whatever to do with the class, the teacher or the work. At such times the teacher is often at a loss what to do to get in touch with the class, how to secure its attention, create the right mental attitude and elicit the snap and vigor he usually obtains. Unless he sizes up the situation correctly, he is apt to lose patience or presence of mind, become irritated, annoyed, do the wrong thing and thus make matters worse.

Under such circumstances various expedients to stimulate interest may be tried. The class may perhaps be rallied by greater effort than usual on the part of the teacher to infuse animation into the work through his own manner, voice and movements — by liberating some of his reserve energy and taking active part in the exercises.

Or the attention may be focused by drilling the class in stopping rhythmic movements in any intermediate position without much or any warning and time allowance, providing such demand is not unreasonable.

Similar effect may be obtained by some lively marching (in open order) involving rapid changes of direction, but not requiring any lengthy explanations or teaching of new elements. Such work, if not carried to the point of confu-

sion, may serve to put the pupils on their mettle by making those who are inattentive conspicuous and perhaps a little ludicrous.

The spirit of emulation and rivalry may also be stimulated by judicious comparisons with the work of other classes in the institution. Such comparisons, however, must be expressed in a tactful way, whether humorously or seriously. In the latter case they may even be carried to the point of actual competition.

Another expedient, which may prove effective, is to start the lesson in a way strikingly different from the customary order: for example, a short run, or marching and running with various kinds of steps, or combined with arm and body movements. This works well on a cold day. Or let the class do some lively passing of the medicine ball, using as many balls as possible and rather short distances.

At times it may be advisable to change the character of the lesson, to give lively, less definite exercises that can be done without too much attention to detail, but with considerable vim and continuity. Mimetic exercises of a not too complicated character, or familiar to the class, are often suitable at such times. In the case of young children, such exercises may represent various natural activities of man or characteristic movements of animals. For older children, and especially for boys, movements occurring in or representing striking features of games and sports are suitable. In all such mimetic exercises the interest is secured or re-enforced by enlisting the pupils' imagination.

With classes of young children a teacher may occasionally arouse lively interest and give much innocent pleasure to the children by letting them take turns in giving exercises to the class. This is, of course, really a modification of the game "Follow the leader," but the children probably do not think of it in that way.

In any class whatever, the substitution of a game for a part or the whole of a lesson that threatens to be a failure is almost invariably satisfactory. But it must be a game that is familiar or easily organized, and in which every one has a chance, or rather is compelled, to be active, both mentally and physically. In such a game the teacher should, if possible, take part with genuine animation and enthusiasm.

Finally, if none of these or similar expedients are feasible for any reason, or if some of those first mentioned are ineffective, the only alternative is to accept the situation as cheerfully and patiently as possible. Let the class know that you are aware of the probable cause, and treat the situation good-naturedly or humorously, as the case may be, taking the attitude that after all it is only a temporary condition and will be made up for next time.

4. ENERGETIC LEADERSHIP AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS.

The influence of suggestion and example. The teacher's mental state and physical condition, as shown in his manner and appearance before the class, greatly influence the quality of the work, the atmosphere and tone, and therefore the degree of success of the lesson. The class quickly senses and accurately reflects any temporary or habitual condition of low vitality, any sign of depression or over-fatigue on the part of the teacher. Both the teacher and class have "off days" and not infrequently these coincide, sometimes when least expected. Occasionally the cause of such coincidence may be perfectly obvious, such as atmospheric conditions, external disturbance, etc.; but more often it can be explained only by attributing it to the unconscious reaction of the teacher on the class and vice versa. The potency of suggestion, for good or ill, is always to be reckoned with and should be constantly borne in mind. It is largely through the suggestive power of example that the right spirit of the work is created and sustained.

Appearing before the class irritated, nervous and disturbed, or dull, absent-minded and careless, will invariably lead to unsteadiness, inattention, slackness or listlessness on the part of the class, and so will weaken the teacher's control. On the other hand, a brisk, energetic, businesslike manner acts like a stimulus and tends to produce a like mental state in the pupils.

Vigorous participation by the teacher in the exercises has a similar effect. It is always helpful in suggesting the proper speed of a movement, steadiness in retaining each intermediate position, sureness in the rhythm. It may sometimes succeed in rousing a class to spirited action when other means of stimulation have proved unavailing. Indeed, it is one of the most common expedients and the chief resource of many teachers in their endeavor to put life and enthusiasm into a lesson.

Like all good things, however, this participation in the work may be overdone. If indulged in too freely (and to teachers with abundant vitality the temptation to do so is often strong), it tends to lose its effectiveness for the purpose of stimulation as the class becomes accustomed to it. Also, it is liable to limit the teacher's chances and defeat his efforts to obtain a good quality of work in other respects than those of continuity, swing and go. For if the teacher remains most of the time in one place, strenuously going through all the exercises with the class while counting to keep time, he does so at the expense and to the neglect of other important phases and duties of teaching.

He is bound to fall short in systematic and critical observation of the work of all the pupils, in careful attention to details of execution, in individual stimulation and assistance. In the nature of things he has neither breath nor opportunity for anything more than very brief, general admonitions and a "whoop-it-up" kind of stimulation. This sometimes takes the form of an extravagant speeding up of the rhythm coupled with numerous repetitions of the same movement, and may be carried to such an extreme that all semblance to definiteness and even unison in execution is lost. At such times it is not unusual to see one after another of the members of the class discontinuing the exercise from sheer breathlessness and local fatigue, until only the teacher and a small portion of the class are working. Only rarely is such a procedure justifiable, and in the long run it will militate against the best interests of the work as well as the teacher.

One other objection may be urged against habitual or excessive execution of the exercises by the teacher. If the class is constantly carried along by the teacher in this way the work becomes too nearly imitative, amounting often to nothing more than reflex action. The pupils are given less opportunity to think and act for themselves, to execute voluntary movements in the true sense. They come to depend too much on the teacher's movements and too little on their own initiative. They are given an apparent short-cut to their solving of motor problems and even then, as likely as not, they fail to get the correct solution.

In view of the drawbacks inherent in this style of teaching, and sometimes on other, less valid grounds (such as inability to do the movements well, disinclination to vigorous bodily exertion, failure to dress appropriately, etc.), many teachers refrain entirely from participation in the exercises. In so doing they deprive themselves and the class of a valuable help in teaching and a legitimate means of stimulation. It is unquestionably an advantage to a teacher to be able and prepared at any time, and especially in the beginning of a lesson or the starting of rhythmic exercises, to throw himself into the movement with abounding energy, executing it with more power and "finish" than any member of the class. But the wise teacher will not do it too much and, above all, not in a routine way.

Good results may also be obtained by applying this principle in a slightly different way. Put the suggestion of snap and effort into the voice when giving the signals or while guiding the rhythm, and also by bodily attitude, gesture and even facial expression (unconscious of course), when making general admonitions and correction. By thus working with and for the class with mind and body, by

word, cues and other forms of suggestion, if not by detailed execution of all the movements, the teacher can not only elicit the most vigorous action from the class, but also arouse the spirit of emulation, and establish the sympathetic relations without which cheerful cooperation cannot be expected. The cold, formal way of teaching, merely giving commands interspersed with routine, stereotyped instruction, sharp peremptory corrections or warnings and trite, timeworn admonitions, will soon deaden interest and enjoyment in the work and make it lifeless and perfunctory. It puts the teacher in the role of a taskmaster, and is incompatible with the true spirit of the work.

Personal relations between teacher and class. Most teachers probably aspire to be popular with their pupils. Such a desire is commendable, providing the popularity is of the right kind. It should be based on respect and affection for the teacher's personality combined with a serious and intelligent appreciation of his professional attainments, namely, the effectiveness of his work and his skill in teaching it in such a way as to make it interesting. A teacher may sometimes be popular by virtue of some natural advantage of appearance, charm of manner, social qualities or commanding presence. But unless he can make such personal attributes count in his teaching, can offer his pupils the kind of work adapted to their needs and abilities, can present such work and get it done in a way to serve the best interests of all the pupils, his popularity is of a shallow kind. It is apt to wane in the long run, or to be confined to a limited number. Almost any teacher with an attractive personality, or with a predilection for and skill in some particular phase of the work, can get a personal popularity or following of this limited kind, and for a time achieve a certain kind of success. But it is not the genuine kind unless the results of the work are what they ought to be.

Whatever the natural advantages of a teacher may be, if he have force of character and the spirit of teaching, combined with a thorough knowledge of the subject, he may command the esteem, respect and in due time even the affection of his pupils through their appreciation of his work, by the justice or "squareness" of his dealing with them, and by the genuine, sympathetic interest he takes in their welfare. Nor need he fear that a firm insistence on order and discipline, attention and vigorous effort will detract from his popularity. Quite the contrary. The more he can imbue them with a sense of the value and beauty of a strict, businesslike atmosphere in the classroom; the stronger his will power — in the sense of proceeding undeviatingly to a desired end and bringing the pupils along with him, demanding their best and accepting nothing less

— the more they will respect and appreciate him and the work. But this will power must be of the lasting kind. It must be guided and tempered by reasonableness, patience and sympathy. A part of the teacher's business is to know how much he can expect from a class, both in the way of work and behavior. He must bear patiently with the shortcomings, understand and gauge the ability, the effort and the possibilities of the class and its individual members. To combine encouragement with stimulation and prodding; to condone while administering rebuke, to correct and admonish in a spirit of helpfulness — in short, to work and deal with his pupils in a sympathetic, friendly way, to the best of his knowledge and ability, is the surest way to control a class and at the same time to secure and retain its good will.

A due respect for the sense of justice and the feelings of the class and of its individual members is essential to friendly relations and the right spirit of cooperation. Do not annoy or harass a class by scolding and nagging. Refrain from excessive repetition of certain movements in order to eliminate non-essential imperfections, or in order to correct and rebuke a few individuals. A little of this kind of stimulation may be effective at times, if accompanied by explicit statement of reasons for such repetition, but it is easily overdone.

Cultivate the habit of maintaining a friendly attitude toward the class even when obliged to censure severely some individuals. Guard against the temptation to reproach the class as a whole for slackness, misbehavior, tardiness, etc., on the part of a few of its members. Such a course is manifestly unjust and is always resented. If habitual it lowers the respect of the pupils for the teacher and leads to indifference, antagonism and ill will. The same is true of sarcasm, peremptory admonitions, imperious or outright "bossy" manner — anything which humiliates or wounds the self-respect of the pupils, individually or collectively. Avoid the use of the personal pronoun in giving directions. "I want you to do thus and so" carries too strong a suggestion of purely personal masterfulness akin to arrogance. It implies that the class is working for the teacher instead of for itself.

The matter of commendation is of considerable importance. Be prompt to acknowledge good work, especially when the class, after some slackness or ragged performance, has made obvious efforts to pull itself together in response to the teacher's stimulation, censure or quiet demand for better work. Extravagant praise and even routine approbation of ordinary performance is of course weakening, both to the teacher and class. It indicates

superlativeness, or too low standards of quality on his part, while it conduces to mediocrity and easy complacency on the part of the class. But considering that good teaching necessarily involves frequent admonitions and criticism, unsatisfactory trials and repetitions, it is wise to offset this negative element to some extent by a reasonable modicum of praise, when the work is such as to justify it.

Approbation of this kind, rendered as the just due to honest effort, gives more point to the constant admonitions, the necessary insistence on close attention to detail, which otherwise would easily degenerate into tedious nagging.

Furthermore, such simple expressions of approval as "Good!" or "That's better!" or "You are doing well, keep it up!" or some humorous comment of laudatory character, if made with the ring of sincerity and genuine satisfaction in the voice, have a marked stimulating effect. The pupils are gratified and spurred to greater willingness and intelligent effort. Their eyes and facial expressions show this, as well as the increased snap, vigor and unison of their movements. Finally, when a whole lesson has been unusually satisfactory from the teacher's standpoint, it is well for him to say so, before dismissing the class, in as simple and gracious terms as he can muster.

Prompt admission of being at fault, when such is the case, effectively heads off trouble and is conducive to good relations. Whenever the teacher is guilty of an error of judgment or makes a slip in his teaching, the mistake must be corrected and any unfavorable impression effaced as soon as possible. If the error is of a technical character, a prompt acknowledgment with due appreciation of the humorous aspects of the situation will strengthen rather than weaken the teacher's power, providing such occurrences are not too frequent. If the mistake involves the personal relations between teacher and class (or some individual), an open-minded willingness to see all sides of the case, a frank, dignified admission and regret if in the wrong, are usually sufficient to allay resentment or any tendency to antagonism.

The teacher can do much toward establishing cordial relations between himself and the class by taking and showing interest in its members outside of actual class work. The way he greets them and chats with them on informal occasions or chance meetings has much to do with their feelings toward him. So does real community of interests, as in their games and athletics, their social affairs or their hobbies. It makes for better acquaintance and good fellowship. Understanding of and sympathetic interest in their school work, their ambitions and particularly their health and physical condition, are conducive to confidence.

Be ready to give help, advice and encouragement whenever needed, yet without being officious. All these things are natural and legitimate channels for the expression of good will and comradeship, points of contact through which the teacher can get into personal touch with his pupils in a dignified yet democratic way.

Where physical examinations are a part of the work the teacher has many opportunities for friendly service other than purely professional. Here he can not only help the pupils to a better understanding of their physical needs and point out the right line of action, but may often be the means of clearing their minds of misconceptions, of influencing their points of view. He may be able to plant seeds of suggestion or to give advice which may lead to better standards and higher ideals of life and work. The real service a teacher can render in this way — hygienically, morally and socially — is as much a part of his function as the formal teaching. Indeed, when the relations between teacher and pupils have come to be of mutually friendly and confidential nature, the teacher can often do more good in an informal way than in the actual teaching. At any rate, he can follow up his formal teaching and try to induce the pupils to supplement the class work by making efforts to apply what they have learned to their daily habits.

It pays to be approachable, to spend time and patient effort in friendly discussion with pupils outside of class, giving reasons for doing some things in a certain way, for omitting or postponing other things; in explaining the mechanism and effects of exercises in a way which they can readily understand; in contrasting the values of different forms of exercise. Sometimes it may be advisable to prove, as far as feasible, the reasonableness, justice or necessity of requiring a pupil to do something which may be inconvenient or onerous to him at the time. It is good policy, generally, to satisfy the pupils' minds and take them into your confidence as far as your time allows and your judgment and sympathy dictate.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUE.

The several factors of successful teaching — personality, understanding of pedagogic principles, knowledge and proper management of gymnastic material, the special technique of teaching — are all so intimately related that in practice it would be difficult to dissociate them. Yet, we may recognize distinctions in these respects. Some teachers may get results in certain directions chiefly by virtue of their personality, while they fall short in other directions owing to deficient knowledge of principles, or insufficient

skill in the technique of teaching, or both. The reverse may also be true to some extent. At any rate, for purposes of analysis and discussion, certain phases of teaching may be grouped under the head of technique. Such, for example, are methods of formation and distribution of the class on the floor; the uses of signals; of the active and relaxed positions; methods of instruction and guidance of exercises; devices for stimulation; variations in the style of work — whether response movements or rhythmic; the selection and combination of movements according to the style of work and the method of teaching it. All these technical details represent, of course, applications of pedagogic principles, and their effectiveness is largely dependent on proper progression and arrangement, as well as on the personal qualities of the teacher.