

PART ONE

Students and Student-Teacher Relations

Immature Young People

The greatest number of your students will be immature and giddy. That is a mark of youth and a characteristic proper to it. Do not be alarmed then, and keep from wanting always to bring students to a seriousness that is against their nature. In connection with this, most of them resemble those butterflies in our garden that are always flying but whose flight is not regulated at all. They leave one flower, return to it, and then quit it to go to another, finding their nourishment and enjoyment in all sorts of places. You should take into consideration their immaturity and act toward them as a wise parent toward a child, with great kindness, patience, and tenderness. Rarely does a wise parent chastise, but a look and tone of voice take the place of reprimands and punishments, making known what the parent really thinks. These are the delicate devices that truly form the hearts of young people and give them nobility of character and loftiness of feelings.

Learn to put yourself within reach of immature young people, treating them with the indulgence that their age deserves, while distinguishing slight faults from those that reflect malice and dangerous tendencies. An immature young person should not be led by way of penalties, because, being susceptible only to transitory impressions, the memory of the correction is soon lost. The young person shortly after falls into the same fault, while not showing real obstinacy. As for these natures, the art of education consists in removing from them the occasions in which they most often fail; thus, in class, be careful to place them between the best behaved and most serious students, in order to remove from them all the small objects that distract and amuse them.

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Generally these students have a good heart. Make use of this excellent quality to win their affection and confidence so that they will consider you less as a teacher than as a father (or mother) or a friend. Above all, know how to arouse their striving by promising and giving them, at opportune times, rewards that flatter them. A skillful teacher knows how to draw a lot of gain from this procedure, for young people are easily led in this way. Wisely used, small rewards and praise can produce the most astonishing results in students.

Also consider how consoling it is for a teacher to be appreciated by the students, to see that they obey less out of fear of penalties than out of fear of displeasing or of not earning the small rewards and praises that are handed out to those students who behave well. It is indeed easy for the teacher who really knows how to educate children to get immature young people to this goal. Most of the time the majority of them need only reflection and more developed reasoning to become excellent students.

