

*Quality School Teacher*  
by Kim Olver

There is a program that is run by the William Glasser Institute called, "The Quality School" program. It is an outstanding program that gets to the heart of school failure and disengagement. It is not based on fancy curriculum. No, instead it focuses on building need-satisfying relationships with students so that they will want to learn. Competency-based learning is the focus and the results are that students' scores on standardized testing significantly increases and discipline problems are greatly reduced.

This program is only endorsed when an entire building is on board with Glasser's teachings. That means everyone in the school has to be trained in Choice Theory—teachers, administrators, custodial staff, cafeteria workers and students.

It is not always possible for every teacher who wants to implement Glasser's ideas to work in a Quality School. There are many teachers who are trying to do this alone or with one other partner. It is certainly more difficult but definitely not impossible. This is why Glasser wrote the book, *The Quality School Teacher*, as a follow up to *The Quality School*, so every teacher who wants to create a quality classroom can do so even if his or her school is not following the same principles.

What does a quality classroom look like? Well, first of all it is up to the teacher to reach out to every student in an attempt to connect in some meaningful way. Forming positive relationships is crucial in a quality classroom. How do you do that? One of the first things a teacher can do is learn everyone's name and greet them warmly when they enter the classroom. Engage in conversation to determine some common interest. Inquire when things seem a little out of sorts. This will help with the need for love & belonging.

Teachers will also teach their students about the Deadly and the Caring Habits and encourage everyone to use the Caring Habits to facilitate positive relationships between them.

Another way to create a need-satisfying environment is to help students feel safe. This is done by establishing a minimum of non-negotiables in the classroom. I recommend having three. First, everyone is going to be safe in the room. Second, people will respect one another and their property. And finally, no one should interfere with anyone who is trying to learn. Once these have been established and agreed upon (after all, what student is going to say they don't want to be safe, respected, or have the ability to learn if he or she chooses to do so?), then most of the students will help keep each other on track and the teacher's job becomes relatively easy.

Quality School Teachers recognize that there are times when students are not going to be of the mindset to learn. I am an adult educator and even in my stimulating, dynamic workshops, occasionally a participant will nod off after lunch! Your students are no different. One time that is historically difficult is that moment of the first snowfall for the year if you happen to live in a colder climate. A Quality School Teacher would recognize

the obstacle and provide his or her students with the opportunity to just stop, turn and look out the window. After about five minutes of this, students are ready to get back into the learning mode. This is so much more effective than trying to teach through the students' and possibly the teacher's awe and excitement.

A quality classroom would have a space in the room where a student could go if he or she were having difficulty managing his or her behavior in class. It would be a comfortable place where students could voluntarily go to "get themselves together." This provides an opportunity for students to self-correct and self-discipline and well as gives the teacher another option other than to eject the student from the classroom, which would be damaging to the relationship.

There are many other elements of a quality classroom and you can learn more about it by visiting the blogs of two teachers I taught Choice Theory to this summer—Denise Leifer and Vicki Chambers at <http://newwavescience.blogspot.com> and <http://radical-teaching.blogspot.com>, respectively. They will be blogging about their efforts to implement Choice Theory in their classrooms this year. Check them out, provide encouragement and perhaps even attempt to implement some of your own strategies. It's an exciting journey these two teachers are on and you can watch their journey unfold.

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