

Correspondence Teaching: Tricks and Tips

by Thomas M. Lyons

When I review a new student's lesson, I pay close attention to factors such as 1) The student's overall demeanor; 2) Their level of self-esteem; 3) Their level of exuberance (are they intent, or are they just going through the motions?); 4) Any signs of depression or anger; 5) The choices they make when providing personal examples (This is the best source for learning more about the student.); 6) The student's self-projection (serious, matter-of-fact, friendly, flippant, chatty?).

If a student is grossly overmotivated after the first few lessons, I will strive to maintain that level throughout the course. If motivation starts to wane, then I will know the student is losing interest. Often this happens when the student is micro-focused on details. I will then do everything possible to get them in touch with the big picture, which was what excited them about the course in the first place.

What I'm looking for is the best way to help the student. For example: a student from a basically dysfunctional background (gleaned from their limited vocabulary, low threshold of tolerance, etc.) tends to need more praise and encouragement. A student from a sound, cultured background, on the other hand, should not get high praise for work that isn't really outstanding. Disadvantaged students tend to be very tough on themselves. I generally find it easier to politely agree with their self-criticism, unless it seems to be rising to the point of self-destructiveness — in which case I offer calming comments, designed to minimize their frustration and help them focus on their previous successes.

There are times when a student starts offering lots of irrelevant commentary, sharing their impatience with their surroundings, or their desire to expand their horizons. I do offer suggestions on ways students can try to obtain materials they need (self-study resources for prisoners, for example). But, I offer these things incrementally — as long as the student continues to take the main lessons seriously and grasps the concepts of the course.

A wise man once said, "The real voyage of discovery isn't in seeking new landscapes but in seeing with new eyes." As a teacher I strive to help students see with new eyes — rather than sit on the sideline and hope the student is learning. I believe that once trust and rapport are established between a teacher and a student, the student is more apt to focus on their assignments — if for no other reason, at first, than to maintain that rapport.

I also find it's important for teachers to remember that students — incarcerated students in particular, but all students — have *(continued on page 47)*

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varying backgrounds, and each needs a particular kind of attention from their teacher. Some may argue that one style fits all, but I find the opposite to be the case. Incarcerated students usually have to deal with great stress and emotional turmoil — but not always; some need little or no special attention.

Finally, I should point out that I don't see my role as a teacher as being a psychoanalyst, but rather to be aware of personality factors that students display which tend to hinder their progress in the courses — much the same way as a coach might motivate a player on a team. After all, the goal of a teacher isn't simply to take a student through a course, but to ensure that the material is learned. **GJ**

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preserving the building, finding tenants and collecting their payments. Interest is the return on the building, a capital asset. The building tax is levied against the value of the building. The last column indicates what is left from the amount paid by the tenants who use each floor of the building. As Mr. Raynam says, it's not "Gross (land) Rent"; it's just economic rent. Out of it comes the portion of the real estate tax that is levied on the value of land. What is left is kept by the landowner, and is termed "unearned income".

In the second chart, Mr. Raynam makes the important point that land value taxation is levied on the "Potential Rent" — that it is not a tax on the "actual (land) rent". The chart simply shows where the money comes from, which ends up as the sum of LVT revenue and the "unearned income".

This was an exercise in illustrating the process by which entrepreneurs, by imputing the costs and benefits of various alternatives, make choices about what buildings to build. That's why the fourth floor in the first chart yields a negative return: it was never built, because a four-story building is not profitable under the stated conditions. Mortgage interest, if any, would simply be a deduction from the interest (and/or rent) column shown.

I very much appreciate your critiques. Perhaps the chart would have been easier to understand if I had used examples of six different buildings. The taller the building, the more it would cost to build it, proportionally. I'll try it that way in the classroom.

Beware, Alodia

Just a word of thanks and of congratulations for your terrific Alodia issue. I read the whole thing this weekend, avidly. I'm glad you stopped the narrative before the US "discovered" WMDs there. — Bruce Oatman, New York