

- Home
- Reading notes
- Good Poems
- Media Diary
- Photos
- Live Blogs
- Links

The Headmaster

From John McPhee's book-length profile of Frank L. Boyden, headmaster of Deefield Academy:

19 - Deerfield has no printed rules and no set penalties. Boyden has only "fired" five boys in sixty-four years, and all five were let go because they showed no remorse over what they had done. (Later McPhee comments that Boyden may have been too lenient in some of these cases.) Boyden himself says: "If you make a lot of rules, they never hit the fellow you made them for. Two hours after making a rule, you may want to change it. We have rules here, unwritten ones, but we make exceptions to them more than we enforce them." He quotes Robert E. Lee: "A boy is more important than any rule." **How do you maintain order then? Through schedules, patterns, expectations. A student should always know what's expected of him at any given moment.**

21 - "A new boy at Deerfield cannot have been there very long before the idea is impressed upon him that he is a part of something that won't work unless he does his share." Somehow Boyden is able to give that to his students. "We just treat the boys as if we expect something of them, and we keep them busy. So many of our things simply exist. **They're not theory. They're just living life.** I expect most of our boys want to do things the way we want them done."

32 - "[Boyden] thinks that the education a secondary school offers has to be considered in its own right and in all its aspects and that the school is not merely a conduit to college. 'Things can be done at our level which they can't do in college,' he says. 'Dean Henry Pennypacker at Harvard always used to say, "After a man is thirty, he is going to settle most of his social and moral problems in terms of his training in secondary school." My philosophy—I can't express it, really: I believe in boys. I believe in keeping them busy, and in the highest standards of scholarship. I believe in a very normal life. It generally seeps in. I try to do the simple things that a well-organized home does for its boys.'"

67 - How Boyden keeps track of academics: "There were no report cards. Each boy had a private talk with the headmaster six times a year and was told where he stood. In these talks, the headmaster drew the boys out, getting their reactions to their courses, and thus learning where the strength of the faculty was." Speaking of faculty, Boyden typically underpaid them and sometimes reneged on promised raises. The faculty stayed.

There's another place I can't find where McPhee describes Boyden's approach to athletics. Every boy was required to participate in sports (I think at least three), but no one was allowed to play or even practice in the off-season. The basketball goals were removed from the backboards so no one could shoot hoops in the gym. Boyden seemed to be of the mind that sports are wonderful things in their place, but they shouldn't take over a person's life.

#education #McPhee

Tags Archive RSS feed QR Code

Made with Montaigne and by anton 