

Letter to the Editor:

*Among the many interesting letters to cross the editors desk, the following is provocative and merits reaction from our readers:*

Memorandum to:

Dr. Alex Pickens

*Educational Perspectives*

College of Education

Subject: A column on Educational Advice

This is a bit of unsolicited, therefore presumptuous and probably nutty, advice. I want to recommend to your consideration a column of "medical" advice in *Educational Perspective*—but instead of "medical" I mean "educational worries," or something equivalent.

From your side as editor, you might gain increased reader interest. The success of columns such as those by Dear Abbie, Dr. Molner, Dr. Brady, Dr. Harrison, Amy Vanderbilt, The Kokua Line and dozens of others suggests that they are attention arousers.

From the readers' side, such a column would provide technical information that the non-professional could not easily look up for himself. This leads right back to advantages to your field, through the prestige-potential implied in a column where the non-professional (Ph.D. in a subject field) gets advice from the professional (D. Ed. or Ph.D. in Education).

No doubt academic snobbishness and some rather human diffidence might make it desirable that the "questions to the doctor" be kept anonymous, lest we betray the ignorance of our brethren on my side of University Avenue, but that's a detail for the editors to consider and is unimportant right now.

As samples which might make my conception more concrete, I am enclosing a few questions indicative of what I would like to see answered in such a column. Quite possibly their

answers would require more research than your staff has time for, but hopefully there are many questions which could be handled easily by a professional educationist, yet would be new information for those of us who have never followed the educational literature.

Albert J. Bernatowicz

*Professor and Chairman*

Department of General Science

Dear Doctor:

1. Is it mere superstition or is there some valid evidence in support of the common student complaint that mathematics requires a special mental aptitude and that, lacking this "mathematical mind", the student simply "can't do math"?
2. I have recently seen a Sunday Supplement article which mentioned that if one identical twin is a poor speller, his twin is also likely to be a poor speller. There seems to be an implication that spelling is related to genetics. Does this mean that college students who are poor spellers should not be blamed for their deficiency? Is there any evidence on the causes and remedies of poor spelling at the college level?
3. My students and laboratory assistants complain that the examinations and course grades do not show an adequate pay-off for the time spent in laboratory sessions. I agree, but argue that the values of laboratory work are not easily tested-for on examinations, and refuse to put trivial laboratory questions on the examinations. This really raises a question about the value of laboratory work in college science courses—if I can't test for it, what basis do

I have for maintaining that laboratory work has any value? Do you know of any studies on the demonstrable value of college science laboratory courses?

4. Have any tests been developed to measure motivation of students and, if there have been, do they show any change in motivation since Sputnik, or over any period?
5. Is there any justification for the familiar examination standard in which 90-100% is A, 80-90% is B, etc., with anything below 65% or 60% considered as failing? I would suppose that this standard makes use of less than one half of the measuring instrument and wonder whether it would not be more justifiable to use the complete range of 0-100% in assigning grades.
6. Have there been any studies which show whether students who take copious notes do better than those taking brief notes, or vice versa? There seems to be a common impression that notes should be just that—notes—but I would like to see evidence showing which philosophy of note taking is more common among high performance students such as honor students, Phi Beta Kappas, Phi Kappa Phis, etc.
7. If homework is graded, there is so much copying that serious injustice results to the conscientious student. If it is not graded, many students won't bother to do it. In either case, too many students do poorly on exams because they didn't do the homework. Is the only solution "to flunk them all!"? Are there any studies on the efficacy of homework in large elementary college classes?