

CEQ•ALL Applied to a Range of Student Profiles

By Tom March © 2006

Choice > Effort > Quality • Attitude > Labor of Love

The following profiles illustrate the CEQ•ALL approach in action and how it might relate to a range of student personalities. This does not suggest that these are the whole range of profiles or that CEQ•ALL is a magic pill. The real benefit of CEQ•ALL is that it encourages the “right kind of conversations” between adults and learners.

“At-Risk”

“At-risk” children often feel powerless and hopeless. Their worlds lack reliable meaning. CEQ•ALL is particularly suited to support them. Providing Choice empowers a sense of self direction. Applying Effort strengthens a low self esteem. The pursuit of Quality should engage these children in the joy of learning that provides rewards and meaning. The educator working with an “At Risk” student would focus on empowerment and the student’s self-worth while keeping attention on stumbles along the way. The key to re-strengthen these students is to help them achieve mastery of something they themselves value. Letting these learners give up or expecting less than their best re-enforces their low sense of self. The Attitude phase could be an important “Ah-Ha” when they finally get there.



“Just Get By”

Often by the secondary years, some students have learned “to play the game.” They have figured out how to do as little as possible and get by. This includes their relations with parents as well as school (and sometimes their friends). CEQ•ALL challenges these students because they are used to being told what to do, then doing the least. These students might evidence an apathetic, “whatever” attitude. This jaded viewpoint is quickly undermined by CEQALL. If students just want to “Get By,” they might Choose insubstantial tasks and then expend little Effort. Certainly Quality hasn’t been an aspect of their approach before. These students will languish rather than “Get by”. Which is intended. Rather than blame their lack of engagement on an irrelevant educational system, they will come to see that they are alone responsible for making their learning and lives what they want it to be. It just takes Choice, Effort and the pursuit of Quality. Over time, the hope is that these students can develop a different Attitude and re-learn another game – to actively manage their own lives.



“Grade Hunter”

We have all had the experience of working with bright and capable learners who have completely bought into a mercenary approach to their education: “Will it be on the test?” “What do I have to do to get an A?” “Volunteering looks good on my record.” “Do whatever it takes” (cheating, plagiarism, etc.). These students are the product of a system that’s broken. If activities are really about results, not learning, what smart child would waste precious time going beyond what is required? Because CEQ•ALL is “required,” these students will “tick all the boxes” required by external assessments, but also grow through a humanistic process that values the intangibles that make life rewarding: loving to read, testing a hypothesis, working simply for the joy of the endeavour. These students would be “successful” at any school they attended. By attending a CEQ•ALL school, they can be authentically happy.



Party Girl / Boy

Perhaps a variant of the “Just Get By” profile, school has very little relevance to the lives of the “Party Girl/Boy.” They may also be “At-Risk” in that their high excitement pastimes like computer gaming, socialising / chatting, under-age drinking / sex, etc. can be addictive. The challenge is to open the idea of curriculum much wider for this group so that they can explore their amusements and ultimately touch the wisdom that can see through to the impermanence of such pleasures. “Telling” these children isn’t helpful, nor is nagging or “just saying ‘no’.” With the wider field of play for student learning, CEQ•ALL should do its work when students pursue the higher phases: Quality, Attitude and Labor or Love. The temporary thrills they are used to will be counter balanced by the more enduring feelings they generate themselves. Whatever course content is “lost” by exploring more contemporary issues can be regained when the Party Girl/Boy applies their creative energy to learning is meaningful.



The Deluded

Some children and teenagers live in a dream world, out of touch with reality. Sometimes they have MTV and Hollywood conceptions of how life will unfold for them. Occasionally they have self-inflated opinions of themselves. A positive self concept is a great thing, but for the “Deluded,” it’s not optimism, but a false promise. Choosing a pathway through learning might not be an obstacle. When it comes to Effort, the Deluded may not ever get



feedback on how much energy was put into something: it might feel like a lot! Thus, impartial and sensitive feedback about Effort and Quality are critical. Self-knowledge and experience-test perceptions of the world is what this child lacks. Helping this student to measurably improve Knowledge and Skills will go a long way to bridge the gap between idealised dreams of glory and what’s really happening. It’s very important never to undermine the person or to allow educators or peers to take the Dreamer “down a peg.” If the student has a rock-solid self-conception that does no harm to him or herself, the reality of CEQ•ALL is all the student needs – we might have a late bloomer on our hands who will flourish in ways we can’t anticipate.

“Bright Under Achiever”

Boredom or distraction can be the trademarks of the bright child who sees the triviality of some schooling activities. Given the opportunity to direct their own learning, these students might immediately blossom. Sometimes under-achievers have issues like a fear of failure that keeps them from applying themselves. If enabling their own Choice of learning pathways doesn’t stimulate Effort by itself, the very requirement to invest such energy might confront what is really simple inertia. Perhaps the child hasn’t been in a situation where simply being “bright” isn’t enough.



“Passing a test” isn’t going to bail out what is an unhelpful strategy. Choice, Effort and honest attempts at Quality are all that matter. “Schooling” doesn’t move on until these are undertaken. Undertaking them will engage the student in things that actually feel a lot better than under-performing.

The Teacher's Pet

Whereas the "Just Get By" characters are tuned to doing the least needed to move through the system unscathed, we all know the Teacher's Pet aims to please. Yet in an interesting way, both are slaves to the system, letting it dictate their behaviour. Overly dependent on others' expectations, they ignore their own needs and interests.

Left to their own initiative, the Teacher's Pet can experience great anxiety and befuddlement trying to determine what it is they want to do. Although these students do exceedingly well in a traditional school approach, having people do what we want isn't necessarily serving our duty of care. Getting through the

first hurdle of honestly Choosing a fulfilling pathway is probably the greatest challenge. Plenty of time and a complete absence of external direction will be required to help the Teacher's Pet begin this self exploration. This initial stage will likely always require extra attention whereas Effort and Quality are almost guaranteed. An Attitude of solid self confidence should emerge in place of insecurity and a need to please others thus enabling true Labors of Love.



The Angry Young Man/Woman

Angry Youths outwardly express the rebellion that Hackers and At-Risk students feel but vent in vandalism and self-destruction.

As in both those cases, CEQ•ALL works to empower Angry Youths to apply the power of their convictions to make a positive difference. Special care needs to be made to gain the student's trust. It's likely that he or she will require proof that their views and Choices are acceptable, so "testing" behaviours may be common. A distinction needs to be made between the person and these behaviours. As Gandhi said, "Hate the sin,

love the sinner." Positive change may not happen over night, but anger is an energy that can be harnessed. These youths should be encouraged to make an Effort and to pursue Quality with many allowances for unconventionality as long as no one is harmed. An idealism and strong sense of justice often propels the "Angry Young Man" to later acts of exceptional compassion.



Enthusiastic Gifted and Talented

Often the enthusiastic learner who is gifted or talented must seek fulfillment outside a school. Although some private schools might cater to these achieving and independent souls, most aren't equipped to provide significant and ongoing extension and enrichment. Because the structure of a CEQ•ALL school is flexible and focused on supporting the individual growth of its students, very able and self-motivated students can learn in harmony with, not in spite of, their schooling. Every aspect of the CEQ•ALL process is likely to be very familiar to these expert learners. One aspect that might be particularly useful is the Merit Matrix where students and mentors can easily access areas of achievement. Few people are supremely capable in every area and the matrix may illustrate patterns or extreme excellence as well as possible gaps in ability. These self-motivated students might enjoy new opportunities for growth. Finally, the personal learning environment affords many technologies that enable collaboration with peers and mentors at a distance. The seamlessness of such relationships will only increase as technologies continue to advance.



The Hacker

Occasionally geniuses are bent on undermining the system. The acts might be petty and of little consequence or they might actually cause significant damage. Examples could range from modifying computer settings and extracting computer mouse balls to tampering with student records to corrupting networks and Web sites. Not all "hacks" are necessarily technology-related. Vandalism, graffiti and stealing school or teacher property have gone on for generations. Most often in schools, these are acts of rebellion, frequently against being forced to march to a specific beat. Sometimes this rhythm has more to do with crowd control than learning and any teenager has a powerful ability to sense hypocrisy. Thus the "Hacker" exacts revenge by being "smarter" than those who "know it all" and control the power. In a CEQ•ALL approach, students direct their own learning and are encouraged to excel. If the Hacker Chose a meaningful path, expended the Effort that comes naturally and focus on true Quality (creating, not destroying), then it would be interesting to see how the learner reflects on his or her Attitude. The student is trusted and encouraged. The best model is that of the Open Source community. Expert programmers openly share their work amongst a group of similarly skilled and motivated technologists. Anyone could destroy the project or embed hacks that undermine the community's trust. Our school technologies could be the portfolios of tomorrow's top programmers or the Google trail of someone that can't be trusted. With freedom comes responsibility. This is the Hacker's lesson.

