In all cases our special education students are dealing with serious and extreme problems of one sort or another that impact their learning in school, by definition. That makes them a very heterogeneous group. Trying to solve all their problems simultaneously is complex and anything but regular. I have been a teacher 30 years mostly with a very wide range of special education students. In this paper I try to convey that the quality of relationship we have with our students has very important implications for whether they are able to reach a degree of facility with subject matter that will allow them to participate more fully in school and society. I describe and discuss what it means to take individuality seriously and forge a group ambience of social and intellectual learning. The emphasis is on what I have done in specific and concrete instances and why I acted as I did. It includes examples from teaching in areas of reading, writing and math as well as the pre-conventional learning phase. Both Caleb Gattegno and Seymour Sarason have personally influenced my thinking and my work.

(Recommended for Special Education/Literacy, Math, and Social Studies, grades K-12.)

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