

2008 UF COE Writing Contest Entry

(This is one of 27 entries submitted in the College's recent writing contest on the topic of "What's Good in Education?". Visit the [writing contest home page](#) for links to other entries, including the winning one.)

WHAT'S GOOD IN EDUCATION?

Teachers make lessons come alive

By **MINTA NAPIER**

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"We may have to deviate from the lesson plan today," the intern warned me. Then the two of us went outside to examine an index card bearing the empty Monarch chrysalis and the newborn butterfly drying its wings. "It's a female Monarch," the intern whispered. "We looked it up on the Internet. Males have a spot on their hind wings; females have that darker vein on their wings. See it?" I saw the vein; I also saw students watching protectively nearby. Recess ended and the students filed into the room for their long division lesson.

Halfway through the lesson a male student yelled, "She's off!" Then everybody moved outside to watch the initial twists and turns of flight. As soon as the creature flew up and over the building we walked back into the classroom and continued as if there had been no interruption. However, the wonder of what we had just observed could still be seen in the students' eyes.

The intern and the classroom teacher have a passion for learning. It's a passion that is highly contagious, and as an Intern Supervisor it is my good fortune to see this passion as it infects one student after another and sometimes entire classes such as these fifth graders that released the Monarch.

In spite of standardized testing, multiple accountability measures and rampant teacher turnovers this passion remains alive and is thankfully infecting thousands of students daily. The Monarch release didn't make headlines like FCAT scores; however I believe 20 years from now these same students will cherish being able to distinguish a male from a female Monarch far more than their FCAT Science score.

Ask any teacher why he or she decided to teach and the answer will be related to a love of learning and a desire to pass this love on to students. Teachers want to make a difference one child at a time.

Research tells us that it is the teacher who makes all the difference; the teacher is the crucial factor that determines whether children learn or do not learn. The classroom can have recently published textbooks and up-to-date technology, and the school may post the highest FCAT scores in the county.

However, the textbook only comes alive when the teacher provides butterfly netting and milkweed leaves. The Smart Board enables the class to travel from Florida to the banks of the Yellow River but it was the teacher who realized the trip would cause the story details to become personally relevant. The county boasts of the highest FCAT scores in the state but it was the teachers who provided the students an environment where learning could become a passion.

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