

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?

That one teacher who changes your life

By **EMILY RABAUT**

2ED, pre-education, elementary education

I can count on one hand how many good teachers I had growing up. And I can count on one finger how many truly inspirational teachers I had. That's right — I had only one teacher whose face will forever be etched in my memory. Long past when I forget my own name, when I can't even lift my fingers to count them, I'll remember his. Mr Duke Chandler.

This is not a jab at the education system. Very few people come into our lives that actually alter us. Very few people hang in our memories and bury themselves in the back of our minds, following our every move.

I left Mr. Chandler in the ninth grade. I left his gray hair, teddy-bear like face and orthopedic shoes in his classroom adorned with Greek mythology and heroic cycle posters. I left behind the imagination-igniting book West With The Night. I left behind the Grammar Jeopardy we played every week. I left behind philosophical debates about Brave New World and free will.

But I took a lot more with me. I knew how to think. And more importantly, I knew how to make others think.

In a time of uncertainty, of war, of economic wastelands and turmoil, of clouds and tornadoes, hurricanes, of evil and violence, of fear, we never know what side to waver to. We argue about science and faith. We argue about the proper way to teach and raise our children. We focus so much on the methodology and the hypothetical that we forget to live in reality. Sometimes, we forget about using what we have because we're constantly hoping for something more.

While those are negatives, Mr. Chandler also taught me that we simply can't know the light until we've experienced the dark. We have to know a little about dark reality if we want to light the way to a brighter future.

And the hardest thing you can do is to light a fire using a paper and a pen. This is what I see in teaching. I see possibility, and this is the most positive thing one can hope for.

Most people consider one a lonely, disappointing and sad number, but it represents something so great to me. There is not just strength in numbers, but strength in one.

It only takes one voice to be heard above the rest. One whisper to make a change. One ripple in the pond to change the tide.

One teacher changed my life. I look around and see thousands of future teachers reaching for the same goal. And if all it takes is one, how can I not see the light?

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