

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?

Seeing through the fresh eyes of a child

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Education is not about benchmarks or progress.

Education is not about idealistic catch phrases or feel good policies.

Education is not what educated professionals think it is.

If we want to know "what's good in education," we must be look to the children in our schools. They can tell us what education is. They can tell us about having the courage to make mistakes and learn from them. They can tell us about what its like to see the world through fresh eyes and have new worlds open up each day. Children have the perspicuity to see beyond arbitrary benchmarks and adult rhetoric beads off them like water off a duck's back. They know what an accomplishment it is when José ties his shoes tightly for the first time, when Sarah's mom gave her a big hug after seeing the picture she painted in class, and when Takesia reads a book cover to cover!

The mind of a child focuses on "what is" as opposed to "what could be." It does not obsess about the future of our educational institutions; how we compare to other schools, counties, states, or nations in achievement; or how to inculcate civic virtues, character strengths, and values. Although pertinent to consider, the child's mind eschews these nebulous issues. Rather, the child's mind tackles questions such as: "What sound does that letter make?" "If the answer to number four isn't 'A' then what is it?" "What is Mrs. Chang's favorite color?" and "Whose birthday are we celebrating next?"

Perhaps, there is wisdom to glean from the minds of our children. Instead of setting our sights too broadly, we too can ask specific questions. We can ask: "How can I better connect with this child or family?" "If the answer to policy X is not "A" then

what is it?" "What does Mrs. Chang think is in her daughter's best interests?" and "Whose birthday are we celebrating next?"

In our current paradigm, there are no shortages of signs to suggest that our educational institutions are in peril. If we focus on the seemingly insurmountable problems in contemporary education, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and hopeless about the future.

However, though I do not advocate turning away from pertinent educational issues, I do implore everyone to broaden his or her focus and consider that somewhere right now a child with ADHD is concentrating on hitting a baseball, a learning disabled student is teaching a peer, a emotionally disturbed child is hugging a friend, a dyslexic child is reading a poem, and a teacher is learning from a student.

Let us celebrate each one of these achievements! Let us see education through the fresh eyes of a child.

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