

Executive Director's Notepad . . .

Keeping Children First in Our Schools



*From the desk of
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When one looks at the pressures facing principals today, it would be easy to forget why we got into this profession to begin with...Most of us did not become educators because we were eager to fill in ream after ream of state and federal reports, or because we knew how to resolve impossible scheduling conflicts that prohibit every child from taking every course when they want it. We did not become educators to solve domestic disputes between warring parents or to support one faction of the school board over another. Nor did we get into the profession to create the illusion of gigantic test score gains so that those with ambition of promotion or fame could look good in a short time frame!

We also didn't anticipate that our performance would predominately be measured by the last test scores our school produced or to work with only gifted and talented students so that we in turn could look good. And we certainly did not become educators with the expectation that politicians, most of whom could not last a week in the classroom, would rail about our incompetence while slashing funding, and promoting grandiose ideas that have little support in research and serve only to promote their own preconceived notions.

Most of us became educators because we thought we knew how to connect with people, especially children. We thought we had something to offer that would unleash the unlimited possibilities within every child.

When we taught, we looked each student in the eye and tried without tiring to find the key that would unlock the spark that we saw there. We knew that each student could achieve success only when he or she began to feel a sense of real achievement. We did not coddle, offer false praise or build self-esteem through lies, but we searched for strength, built on those strengths and used the confidence this produced to tackle deficiencies.

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In sum, great educators look at the child, not the test score. Outstanding scores, scores that last and have meaning, come from children who have developed a sense of wonder and a love of learning. Great teachers and principals elicit wonder and nurture a love of learning. This is a people endeavor, not a paper and pencil formulated production line.

America's success is dependent upon schools that nurture the individual and encourage human collaboration, not schools that assure the mass of students meet the arbitrary minimum standard in all things, while ignoring the unique individual gifts of each child. Don't forget why you got into this business to begin with, because that is the reason America has led the world in creativity, innovation, science and business. And most importantly, never stop looking for that unique key, hidden in each child, that starts him or her on the road to success.