

The Best Teachers Practice the Art of Learning

Thoughts on teaching from David Hicks, Rector of St. Paul's School (NH)

A Good Teacher:

- *provides a model of an inquiring mind, of intellectual curiosity.
- *offers a living example of someone who keeps growing and reaching higher levels intellectually, and thus is not a “know-it-all”.
- *is willing to take risks, stretch horizons, and moves outside of an intellectual comfort zone.
- *fleshes out humility; is not intimidated by his/her own ignorance, is not held back by pride of knowledge, is always seeking wisdom, never having arrived.
- *is a flesh-and-blood picture of what kind of student we want in the school.

“...Having now had an opportunity to study schools as a headmaster as well as a teacher, I would argue that the *teacher*, not the curriculum, needs to be the focus of reform. The greatest value of the curriculum (proposed in the book) is that it sustains and nurtures teachers *a practitioners of the art of learning* while discouraging non-learners from entering the profession...”

“...The classroom should be no place for teachers who are afraid of change, who are willing to talk about ideas *ad nauseum* but unwilling or unable to act on them to experiment, to grow, to absorb new disciplines, to teach beyond themselves, their college lecture notes, their state-approved lesson plans, their textbooks...”

“...(this book) presents a formidable challenge to schools controlled by administrators and teachers who simply want to be left alone and allowed to maintain old habits in the midst of a rapidly changing world... This type of conservatism is contrary to the spirit of learning. Schools are places where students learn *because* they are places where learn. Only a school (and by extension a curriculum) that encourages teachers to be always learning will keep its *teachers fresh and fearless* and its *students happy and motivated* in their studies, ready to test their lessons against life...”

“We are a nation at risk, but not simply because our children cannot read and write, or keep up with the Japanese, or think and talk intelligently about the basic ideas of our intellectual tradition. We are at risk because modern pedagogy has severed the vital link between knowing and doing, because the moral marrow of who we are and of what our purposes are is being schooled out of our children, because we have become uncertain of our norms, and have abandoned *education's transcendent and ennobling end, the pursuit of self-transforming truth.*”

[Excerpts, *Norms and Nobility: A Treatise on Education*, David Hicks, 1981-1990]