

## REACHING EACH CHILD

Marcy A. Winer<sup>§</sup>

Graduate Student, M.Ed. Program in Early Childhood Education, Rivier University

I am a firm believer in a school system in public education that reaches each child. The public school system is a gateway to learning for every child that walks through its doors. Each child that I see daily has a different background situation. Some come from poor families in the urban setting in Lowell. Many are single parents on welfare or indigent. Each child deserves the best public education we have to offer.

We, as public educators, need to meet and reach ALL of our students. Often, we are so rushed through the day that we miss the little things they are trying to tell us.

One boy, who had his hand up the entire time during my reading group, would not wait for me to let him have his turn. He waved his hand wildly in the air, until I called on him. I said, "Johnny (not his real name\*\*), can this wait?" "No," he said, "I just want to tell you I like your necklace." Wait... that was an AH HA moment (to borrow Oprah's phrase). "Thank you, Johnny." I said. He smiled and I did too.

We made a nice connection and went on with the story we were reading together.

If we do not take the time to connect, we miss important moments like that.

Often times, our students come to school hungry and leave hungry. Poverty, hunger and anger are all too common at my school. I try to give each child some extra attention when I see certain behaviors that warrant a "gentle touch."

As educators, we are busy, busy with the day to day curriculum and multiple tasks that fill up our day. I find that a moment or two to sit and breathe with the children is a good time to regroup-center ourselves and move along. I often do this when the children are on the rug and we have a few minutes after lunch to catch our breath and move the day along.

Hunger is an awful barrier to learning. Many times, we have such hungry children that it breaks my heart. It impedes their learning, their health suffer and they are unable to focus and learn. Meeting academic benchmarks is nearly impossible. As adults, we are surrounded with a surplus amount of food all the time. It is the saddest thing to see a hungry child. One child I had about 8 years ago, was hungry all day. He had severe behavior problems as well and was suspended quite often. I used to sneak him extra food at lunch for him to put in his backpack to take home. I wish I could have taken him home myself and cooked him a meal to eat.

Children in urban schools are suffering with poor health and especially dental care. Something must be done about this to ensure that these children do not become ill from poor dental hygiene. Many children are allowed to visit the dentist when the traveling dentist comes to school on a semi-regular basis. When that occurs, the children get their teeth cleaned for free and even receive dental fillings. While it is sometimes traumatic for the children, (their parents do consent to this) at least it is helping them with dental care and maybe and hopefully they can practice good dental health at home.

Each day, I try to reach each child. I give them a smile, try to make them feel that they are wonderful, loved and cared for when they come into the class in my room. I love working with children and will continue to reach each child as long as I am able to.

---

<sup>§</sup> **MARCY A. WINER** has been in education for 10 years as a paraprofessional and since last fall has been enrolled in the Early Childhood Master's degree program at Rivier University seeking her teaching certification. Marcy enjoys working with young children and has been teaching in Kindergarten for many years. She enjoys leading reading groups. Marcy has written a yet unpublished children's book about a little boy who befriends a bumble bee. She hopes to publish that book soon. Most recently, she has begun a campaign to aid homeless children and began Project DEAR (Donate, Educate, Amaze and Read!). This program collects new and gently used books for children in need. In her free time, Marcy enjoys writing, making jewelry, sewing, cooking, exercising and lots of crafting.