

Sharing the lives of children

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Every classroom, every school, whether we like to admit it or not, reflects, in effect, a microcosm of the society we will have. Teachers and school administrators always forget this. Our schools have become such disjointed arms of society that school administrators feel that their roles are different from what the child has to do when she steps out of school. They assume that the child can make the leap, as it were. Well, the child does make the leap, but carries with it the baggage of her school days. That the child must pass through a seamless continuum from childhood to adult life is thwarted by the institution of schooling.

I look back on my school days and realize that I have long forgotten the quadratic equations drilled into me, the parsing of clauses, whether Alexander the Great died in 248 BC or whether there are copper mines in Chile. What I do remember are the teachers who went out of their way to help us when the chips were down, teachers who kept their faith in us as responsible people, times when we came together to undertake a common task and accomplish it, when the whole school would rally together to cheer a game. These have been lasting lessons for life. I also remember every instance when I or others were unfairly reprimanded or punished or excluded with no forum to express our feelings. No child forgets these

and it is these then that are moulded into the clay of the future.

To ask: *So what does the classroom, and the school, have to do with creating a culture that reflects the values we would like to live by* – is to ask – what is the purpose of education and the purpose of the school. We are asking what values do we want children to imbibe and carry into adulthood, what is the culture that they will live by, what traditions should they follow or not follow? But is this what our schools are working towards, or have they

