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Teaching for educated children

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Teaching for Educated Children
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Acknowledgments

As I consider my thoughts on "Teaching for Educated Children," there have been two people who have been especially inspiring to me. These individuals have prompted me to think about my own qualities on the road to becoming an educated person, as well as the qualities I hope to impart to my future students.

The first of these people is Barb Witzel, my sixth grade teacher. She has helped me grow over the last nine years both personally and professionally. Serving as my mentor in various situations, Barb has helped me see the importance of quality teaching for content area knowledge and for developing personal qualities in elementary students. Always encouraging, Barb has been a strong force in fueling my desire to be a teacher.

The second is Dr. Susan Koch. Her contributions to this process as my thesis advisor have been extremely valuable, but more important is that she was the person who first asked me to take part in the "What are the qualities of an educated person?" discussion. Considering that question led me to evaluate my college experience, as well as my purposes in becoming a teacher. Because of her initial push to think about these things I have become a better student and a better teacher.
The Original Question

Considering the question, "What are the qualities of an educated child?" has been both a personal and professional journey for me. That question was what I sought to answer nearly a year ago and have been thinking about ever since. Through this paper I intend, not just to share any conclusions I have reached, but also describe the thinking process I went through to get there. Actually, the process may have been more significant than the end. I believe that it has been a worthwhile topic to investigate, helping me to grow as I complete my own formal education and look to begin helping others through the process of becoming educated. Throughout my years in school I considered myself more educated than many of my peers, but I have decided I was far from correct. Perhaps I was intelligent, but not necessarily educated. I have had to examine both my own state of education and that which I intend to bring into the lives of my students. Such an examination, I think, is important for every teacher education student to conduct before ever being in a classroom full time.

My idea, to look into the qualities of an educated child, actually came from thinking about what it is that makes a person educated, or by some definitions, successful. In popular culture today there are many ideas about what makes this so for any given individual. Opinions range from highly academic to highly social. One idea comes from the national bestseller *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. In this book Steven R. Covey (1989) outlines the principles he feels make one effective, including a look at personal vision, leadership, management, interpersonal skills, communication, cooperation and being balanced. Robert J. Sternberg (1996) in *Successful Intelligence: How Practical and Creative Intelligence Determine Success in Life*, divides the determiners of success in life into a "triarchic brain theory of
intelligence," discussing creative, analytic, and practical intelligences. These involve skills and processes ranging from overcoming obstacles and allocation of resources to problem solving and "street smarts." One other theory summarizes success in life as depending not on the typical interpretation of intelligence, but rather on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Aspects of this EQ are motivation, impulse control, mood regulation, empathy and social competence.

The University of Northern Iowa has concerned itself with defining what students should be like by the time they graduate in order to lead successful lives. A group of faculty began discussing the qualities of an educated person in the spring of 1996, and have expanded the discussion to business leaders, students and staff since then to formulate the current draft of Target Qualities for UNI Graduates (1997). This is where the journey for my thesis began.

One of my professors was a part of the original faculty group and asked our class one day what we thought it meant to be an educated person. My response at the time was something along the lines of "someone who, when he reads a book or article, knows every reference to another piece of literature and its significance." After class that day, I dismissed any thoughts on the topic I had. However, a few months later I was asked to be on a committee planning a presidential symposium on this topic for faculty and business leaders. Through the planning and participation in this event, my thinking about college and why I was here did a complete turnaround.

I came to UNI knowing who I was going to marry and knowing that the faster I got through school, the faster I could get on with the rest of my life. College to me at that point was a necessary means to a desired end - marriage and a career. Through planning the symposium and examining the set of qualities the faculty had developed, I saw that I was very far away from many of
them. I kept looking at college as something that should give me the knowledge I needed to get a teaching license, but there is much more that enters into the experience.

As stated in *Target Qualities for UNI Graduates* (1997), the aim of undergraduate education at UNI is “to create a learning environment that enables students to develop the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to live thoughtful, creative, and productive lives” (p. 4). I certainly agreed with the knowledge, skills, and productive parts of that statement, but I wasn’t too sure about the values, thoughtful and creative aspects of it. I struggled with this as I considered how I had been approaching my education. Looking through the component lists for knowledge, skills and values, I saw more questions surfacing in my mind as to how curious a student I actually was and how much I was trying to develop my information or citizenship skills. I began to see that there was a bigger purpose in what I was learning than simply being able to get a teaching job when I graduated. I saw that I had missed much as I completed my courses, with the pride that I could pass any multiple choice test someone threw at me. As I thought more about the qualities of an educated person, I began to see that the activities and requirements for classes I passed off as busywork and inane may have taught me more than I knew, or at least wanted to admit. Finally, I began to realize that I should be investing my time in developing these qualities through every resource available to me. If not, I was wasting a good opportunity.

From my thoughts on my own education I started to question my own desire to be a teacher. I had known all my life that is what I wanted to be. Could I still do that after realizing how I had treated so much of my own education? What right did I have to be a teacher? If I am a teacher, what do I want for my students? Do I just want to give them the knowledge and skills to be productive
in the next level of schooling or do I want to give them more than that - some knowledge, skills, and values for thoughtful, creative, and productive lives? This, then, gave me my question for my thesis - What are the qualities of an educated child? If this sort of discussion could be made about college students, I thought, it should be able to be extended to the elementary level. College is certainly not the first place where we are in the process of being educated. In order to get educated people, doesn’t it follow that we should have educated children as well?

**Qualities for Children**

There are many ideas about what children should be learning in elementary schools, from the very general to the very specific. Some lament that we just need to get “back to the basics” and focus on the fundamental literacy and math skills that will be needed in children’s lives. School districts have curriculum guides determining what will be taught at each grade level. Even larger yet are standards, outlining specific objectives to be met in various subject areas.

Some states have outlined particular outcomes their students should meet as a result of their educational systems. One such state is Connecticut, which outlines in its *Common Core of Learning* (1997) various areas in which students should be competent. Categories include: Foundational Skills and Competencies; Understandings and Applications: Discipline-Based and Interdisciplinary Skills; and Attitudes and Attributes. More specific areas cover things from reading and writing to effort and persistence. For example, in the Attitudes and Attributes section it is stated:

**Intellectual Curiosity**

*Students actively explore the world of ideas.*

As part of education in Grades K-12, students will:

- demonstrate an inquiring attitude, open-mindedness, and curiosity;
create and explore new ideas and adapt existing ideas to generate alternative possibilities; demonstrate independence of thought necessary for leadership and creativity; and pursue lifelong learning.

Iowa has also defined the skills its students should have the "opportunity to acquire," as outlined in the final report of the Commission on Educational Excellence for the 21st Century (1997).

The Commission envisions:
That every student has the opportunity to acquire the skills they will need to meet the challenges of the future. In addition to the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic (the three R's), these include:
1) the ability to collect, analyze, and communicate ideas and information;
2) the ability to identify and solve problems;
3) the ability to apply mathematical reasoning and computational skills to real-world problems;
4) the ability to read and understand work-related materials;
5) the ability to use technology;
6) the ability to interact with others;
7) the ability to function effectively as a member of a team;
8) the ability to take responsibility for career and life choices; and
9) the ability and desire to demonstrate respect for others (p.6).

As I thought more about the qualities of an educated child, I also began to realize that there are many lists describing what children should demonstrate in elementary school. On my own report card from sixth grade I found items such as dependability/responsibility and self-control, outlining those qualities that were beyond what could be measured by tests and projects. Somehow these things were judged part of the elementary school experience, or why else would they be evaluated by my teacher?

As I considered the qualities of an educated child I knew I wanted to stay away from specific content areas and lists. Teams of educational experts have recently published standards in math, science, social studies, and reading and I did not want to get into the business of simply repeating what was already said.
I was interested in a broader, perhaps more philosophical, approach that I, as a preservice teacher, felt qualified to discuss.

As I tried to come up with a definition of an educated child, or a list of qualities educated children should possess, I found myself troubled by the fact that I was trying to define what people should be. Wasn’t this ignoring individual differences in background and personality? Should I be asking my students to conform to some preconceived idea of what I thought they should be?

**The Differences in Children**

Two experiences led me to reconsider my question “What are the qualities of an educated child?” as the premise of my thesis. One such experience occurred through one of my education classes. As part of a health education methods class, we each had to teach a health lesson to elementary children. No problem, I thought. However, these children were in the English as a Second Language classrooms at Elk Run Elementary School in Waterloo. As a student who was educated in a predominantly white, middle class system I had no idea what I would be facing at this school just 15 minutes from where I grew up. I had a wonderful lesson prepared. We were going to discuss dental hygiene - writing a play to perform with puppets I had brought along to communicate what we knew about our teeth and how to keep them healthy.

What a surprise I had waiting for me! We arrived at the school early in order to eat breakfast with the children, many of whom are Bosnian refugees just recently arrived in the United States. Somehow I thought they would know more English, but I struggled to even communicate with the children I was going to be “teaching.” As we sat in the cafeteria amidst the children I heard Croatian and Spanish conversations, no English! When I taught my lesson, we spent most of our time brushing the puppets teeth and repeating simple sentences like “Milk is good for my teeth.” I wasn’t sure if they even knew what milk was!
These students, mostly refugee and immigrant children, are a part of American education for whom I was considering the question "What are the qualities for an educated child?" They are enrolled in the public school system and have every right to the same education that I received. Yet there was so much difference between them at age six and me at age six. How could I expect the same things of them as I would have of myself at that age. Not a year ago they were in the midst of a war, running for their lives; and today I was proposing to measure them against some standard for an educated child? How unfair of me to impose my own ideas of what school should be, based only on my experience.

Another less dramatic, but still enlightening, experience came as I interviewed sixth graders at the elementary school I had attended. I was interested in gaining their perceptions of what made them educated. "What do you need to be like for junior high?" I asked them. Their discussion surprised me with how sophisticated their answers were. "We need to be responsible, able to work in groups, self-disciplined and have leadership skills," they said.

I also asked them to write for me briefly about one quality they felt they were either especially good at or especially needed to work on. These written responses showed me the wide variety of levels of thinking the children had. One student responded, "I'm good at being mentally tough because I mostly never get mad and I always think positive." Another said, "I'm good at group discussions and being a good leader. I'm good because I let other people talk when they want too." "My quality is art," one student wrote. "I think I am good because nobody can mess up art and lots of people say some of my drawings are good." Another response was, "I'm good at spelling. I know I am good at it because I practice it a lot." Reading through these children's, and the rest of their class' answers reminded me of the many differences among a fairly
homogeneous group of sixth graders. Not only did I see differences in the qualities mentioned, but also in what they thought of themselves, how they believed they learned these qualities, and the effectiveness of their communication of what they were thinking to me.

Thus I struggled with the thought of whether it was possible or appropriate to hold a rigid ideal out there when children are so far from being done with anything. Why should they have mastered some set of ideas or values by the time they are twelve? I would not want them to think they had mastered some aspect of their lives and no longer needed to grow, or actually be anywhere near mastering anything. These students were twelve year olds - worried about braces, the opposite sex and what they wear to school, among other things. Others were dealing with the breakup of their parents’ marriage, a violent neighborhood, or worrying about having enough food to eat. How could I think they should have realized self actualization or be competent leaders? There is much more growing for them to do. The qualities I had been thinking, reading, and hearing about in college come from experiences, both in and out of school. These were experiences my young subjects simply had not had.

And so I changed my premise. Instead of looking to define an educated child and corresponding qualities, I wanted to define how a teacher could teach in order to foster the development of these qualities. Instead of defining an ideal I would never want to impose on anyone, I wanted to define an ideal for myself that I felt more comfortable in expecting. The reason I want to be a teacher is, after all, not to make my students into something, but rather to give them everything that I can in the time we have together. Sixth grade is not the beginning, nor is it the end of the road for them; but it may be the one chance I have to give them something they can keep for a lifetime, a lifetime in which they may or may not become “educated people.”
Teaching for Educated Children

Thus the question of "What should a teacher be like in order to foster educated children?" is what I am now hoping to answer. Much of this boils down to my personal thoughts on what makes a good teacher. While I have investigated learning theory and motivation, management and discipline, developmental stages and physical growth in classes and on my own, there is only so much I can learn from books. Much of my reading has brought up good points for me to think about, but I still consider it my thoughts from there. Maybe a lot of what I am going to say has already been said, in better ways even, but that is okay. For what I believe about teaching is just that, what I believe. It has been formed through classes, textbooks, essays, and real-life experience. It may change when I actually am a teacher in a classroom every day of the year. But right now this is what I want to be, and I hope I have the courage to hold myself to it in the years to come, and also to change for the better if I see a need to do it.

It is a debated topic as to whether teachers should be involved in imparting values or "moral education," but I believe that it is an integral part of a child's experience in schools. Deborah Meier (1996), director of Central Park East Schools, states, "What we praise, what we attend to, and what we announce as valuable all help to predispose children in one way or another" (p. 272). Everything that goes on in a classroom shows children something about what their teacher believes, be it the desk arrangement or the number of times a particular child gets called on to answer. Teaching definitely involves more than content and it is necessary for a teacher to reflect on these things before ever entering a classroom. The moral implications of a curriculum require mediation of a skillful teacher (Costa and Liebmann, 1992), and should never be overlooked in efforts to impart just the basics to students.
My Primary Goal

My primary goal as a teacher is for every child in my classroom to feel a part of a community. Perhaps this will not be a foreign feeling to some, but to others it will be a new experience. In order for learning to take place, children need to feel that someone cares that they learn. Most times this motivation comes from a teacher or parents, or maybe the desire to prove you are better than someone else; but it would be great if we could help our children want each other to learn, and in turn want to learn themselves. Ernest Boyer (1995) states, “Educators must help students see...that education is a communal act, one that affirms not only individualism, but community” (p. 16). Learning is enhanced through involvement with one another, the kind of involvement possible when students feel a part of a greater whole.

Many things enter into this sense of community. One of the main components is caring for each other or getting away from being self-centered. Children must constantly be made aware of how they can help each other learn, be it through collaboration or simply encouragement. Teachers can encourage this quality in their students in many ways, from class sharing to multicultural education. Students need to see how they are similar and dissimilar to each other, recognize the value of each other, and appreciate their classmates’ strengths and weaknesses. Often this is not the case. “As children move up through the grades, they are more and more judged in competition with one another, and displays of generosity and affection are increasingly seen as divisive and inappropriate. We glorify...the impersonal over the personal...” (Meier, 1996, p. 273).

Two elements of caring for each other are respect and honesty. Students need to be respected by me, as their teacher, as students and as people. I need to remember to place myself in their shoes and treat them as the children they
are, not just little adults. I must respect their childishness while at the same time urging them to become more mature in their thinking and behavior. Students also need to know that they are expected to respect each other, not only because I want them to, but because that is what they would want of their peers. Differences in interests and abilities need to be respected, though never used as an excuse not to achieve.

Respect also extends beyond the classroom. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) establishes education as being "directed to the full development of the personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (qtd. in Piaget, 1973, p. 41). Not only must there be respect in the classroom, but this respect will develop into respect for all humans. Respect learned at school carries over into society and community life.

Honesty is another important part of the classroom atmosphere. I will be honest with my students about what I expect from them, how I feel, and in any explanations that I give. I will not be afraid to say "I don't know" if I really don't. In turn, honesty will be expected from my students in explanations of misbehavior, examination of motives, and in expectations of me as their teacher. I would find it very hard to learn from someone I can't trust. It would also be difficult to teach to children I don't trust, because I would always be questioning what they are saying or wondering if they are telling me the truth.

Another important aspect of community is division of responsibility. Community has at its root the idea of "commune," which brings to mind ideas of togetherness and sharing. One person always dictating over others would not be a community; yet that is how many people envision a classroom. Instead, I want my classroom to be a place in which students share responsibility with their teacher and with each other, both in academic and nonacademic matters.
Booker T. Washington said, "Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and let him know that you trust him" (qtd. in Canfield & Siccone, 1993). I believe this to be the case. Students need to be encouraged to give input about what they want to learn and how they learn it. They should share responsibility for what they need to learn. Classroom routines and upkeep can also be shared with students, oftentimes even done better than if the teacher had been dictator. Students can create inventive ways to deal with duties and discipline, and the ownership they feel as being part of the process does more for classroom management than any teacher plan ever could.

Community is also brought about by teamwork and communication. In classrooms where students are constantly in competition with each other and students are found harboring any advantage in knowledge they may have, there may be a few high achieving students; but the lower achieving students have no hope for help except within the limited time a teacher can give. In the real world, one does not often make a career in isolation; it is only through work with others that many people produce. In a learning community, students will do work in teams, "to strengthen the cooperative learning aspect of the curriculum and prepare them for how they will need to address problems as employees and citizens" (Commission on Educational Excellence for the 21st Century, 1997, p. 8).

While there is still the need for individual accountability and assessment in schools, there is a lot to be gained from cooperative learning. There are many things that are not learned best through teacher instruction followed by student practice and mastery. While facts could be learned in other ways, true understanding, synthesis, and application often comes from helping each other see the many facets of an idea or concept. By having to explain it to peers, who,
Unlike teachers, do not know how things work and have to be convinced, students can clarify their own thinking and come to greater understandings.

One other aspect of the classroom community is fairness. Only in an atmosphere where children know that they will be treated fairly can they consistently feel a part of a community. This does not necessarily mean that I will treat each child exactly the same. Instead, it means that the children will be dealt with, taking circumstances into account, but in such a way that no child receives an unfair advantage. Two children may be treated differently for a similar offense, but they will know that I have done so for a reason and that reason should be clear to them.

Finally, my classroom will be a positive environment where its members are not afraid to show their sense of humor. Humor to me is something that makes a person more real, more approachable. A teacher needs to be this to her students. Being able to take things lightly when appropriate helps students keep perspective on the relative importance of things, as well as to diffuse tense situations.

Our Primary Goal

As a classroom community, our primary goal will be learning. Anything that gets in the way of learning will be addressed and resolved. I will do everything possible to ensure that each student has the opportunity to learn.

The basis of our learning will be that it is student-centered. Within a framework for accomplishment, students will have choices as to what they learn. This does not mean that they determine the curriculum, rather that they have choices within the curriculum. They will also have the opportunity to explore areas of interest to them that may be outside the normal instruction areas. Alvin Toffler (1970) remarks, in a discussion on education for the future, “Children
should be given a far greater choice than at present; they should be encouraged to taste a wide variety of short-term courses..." (p. 365).

Instruction will focus on the students and how they learn best, not simply teacher-directed lecture with student practice following. I want them to know the joy of learning something because they see how it fits together, not just mastering a bunch of facts I have given them. Jean Piaget (1973), very influential in regard to hands-on learning and developmental appropriateness, said, "The first of these conditions [necessary for reform] is, of course, the use of active methods which give broad scope to the spontaneous research of a child or adolescent and require that every new truth to be learned be rediscovered or at least reconstructed by the student, not simply imparted to him" (p. 15).

Students learn most effectively when they must construct their own knowledge or at least come to an understanding for themselves. If they have been a part of the process in seeing how or why something is, it is more likely that they will be able to remember that for a longer period of time. And, if they do not remember what they have learned, they will retain the mechanism for constructing that knowledge once again.

The focus of the student-centered approach is curiosity. Young children are naturally curious as to what goes on around them and why, and I plan to utilize that in my classroom no matter what age I teach. If the children have lost some of that curiosity I want to help create it again. "While curious young children still ask why things are, many older children ask only "Will this be on the test?" All students should be encouraged to ask "Why?" because "Why?" is the question that leads to connections" (Boyer, 1995, p.17). One way to foster a "curious community" is to be curious myself. I will share with my students things I am wondering about, and what I am doing to investigate. Students will be
encouraged to bring questions to class so they can use their classmates as resources or perhaps investigate things together.

Another way curiosity will be fostered in our classroom will be through the use of questioning throughout every day. Not only will I be asking students to answer questions and encouraging them to ask questions about what they are curious about or what they do not understand, but we will constantly be asking each other how we know something is true or how an answer can be justified. Many times children are asked “How do you know that is the answer?” only when they have the wrong answer. This conditions them to change their answer whenever challenged, instead of defending what they think. Through this questioning reasoning will be emphasized, making sure students can logically justify why and how they know and do things.

Much of students’ curiosity comes from what they observe in the world around them. Making connections to the real-world will also be a part of the learning in my classroom. Current educational initiatives, including mathematics and science national standards, call for students to be able to relate what they know to their everyday lives. The Governor’s Commission on Educational Excellence for the 21st Century (1997) demands that students be assessed on “their ability to apply what they have learned to real-world situations, not simply on the basis of scores on multiple choice tests” (p. 8). In order for students to be able to apply their knowledge, the application must be practiced in the classroom. We need to discuss how math skills can be used as they shop or the multitude of ways reading and writing are used each day.

A quality I will model and expect of my students is hard work. Too often students produce only what they need to get by, which inherently limits what they learn, as well as what they do in the future. Knowing that a teacher will accept less than your best on a repeated basis leads to the lowering of your
best, so much that the student often underestimates what he or she is actually capable of doing. On the flip side, there are students who try extremely hard and will never produce the work considered average for another student. It is my goal to recognize this hard work and base evaluation not only on what has been done, but also on what effort has been shown. This does not mean, however, that I will lower standards for children who test lower than others. I simply will assess achievement in a variety of ways, so that objective performance is not the only measure of a student’s success in school.

Along with hard work and the idea of cultivating curiosity comes self-discipline. I want to give every child the chance to learn about something that captivates their interest and show this learning to me however they think best. Each student will choose a topic or idea to explore and be left alone to do so. It will be up to them (with help as needed) to come up with a plan for investigation and evaluation as well as keep themselves on track along the way. I feel this is an important part of learning, for later in life they will not always have someone else setting guidelines and telling them exactly how to perform a task.

Another quality I will demonstrate in myself and expect of my students is empowerment. I want students to realize they can be independent learners, but also to know when to ask for help and not be shy in doing so. Along with this goes the ability to use a wide range of resources when appropriate, including computer and information sources. These will be resources not only provided to them, but ones that they must seek out and evaluate.

**The Primary Outcome**

As a community whose primary goal is learning, our primary outcome will be effective students and citizens. Students will have had the opportunity to develop as individual learners particular qualities that result from their
experience of the school environment. These qualities are ones that are not only desirable now in the 1990s, but are qualities that will be imperative for students to possess in the twenty-first century and beyond when they assume their adult roles as citizens, parents, employees, and perhaps, leaders.

The first of these is that students will have a solid knowledge of the basic skills, including reading, writing and mathematical skills. They will need these skills as they continue in further education, as well in their lives as members of society at large. One sixth grader I interviewed summed this up well, when asked what she will remember the most about elementary school she said, “I will remember all of the basic things we learned in elementary school. You have to learn these things because you use them everyday of your life. These are all skills you need to know.” Although there are many other things that enter into education, the basis of it all should be learning what students need for life.

Another quality that is essential to the primary outcome of education, to be effective students and citizens, is the desire for lifelong learning. In addition to learning the basic skills, students must be willing and even desire to continue to learn new things throughout their lifetime in various areas. “Employers complain, [about students not being properly prepared] although, when one gets right down to it, they’re mostly upset not about new employees’ lack of academic expertise but about their unwillingness or inability to pick up new skills and new aptitudes...” (Meier, 1996, p. 276). This is a quality that applies directly to the world of work, as employees change jobs and responsibilities more often than in the past. However, this should not only apply to the work setting, but also to students’ pursuing interests for the joy of learning about them, whatever the application.

Effective students and citizens are also flexible and adaptable. These qualities apply to many areas of life. Toffler (1970) remarks, “Schools of the
future, if they wish to facilitate adaptation later in life, will have to experiment with far more varied arrangements. Classes with several teachers and a single student; classes with several teachers and a group of students; students organized into project teams; students shifting from group work to individual or independent work and back...” (p. 362) This is one aspect of flexibility - that students can work with a variety of arrangements. Another aspect of this can be exhibited through the teacher’s attitude about unplanned events. The teacher must display the attitude that there is a plan, but it can be modified as needs or unforeseen circumstances and opportunities arise.

There are also qualities that follow directly from aspects of the classroom as a community of learners. Effective interpersonal skills should follow from communication and teamwork. A positive environment where responsibility and respect are emphasized will help students develop confidence in themselves as people as well as exhibit a sense of responsibility for themselves, others around them, and the natural world. This responsibility, along with reasoning and questioning skills, will enable students to be responsible decision makers, considering positive and negative effects of various options before a decision is made. Hopefully the decisions will also lead them to be balanced people, seeing the relative importance of work, family and other areas of their lives.

Curiosity and student-centered instruction will encourage students to be skeptical as well as become creative problem solvers. They will desire to figure out what is happening around them and how to solve problems that are presented. They are used to not being given an answer, but rather constructing their own knowledge. When presented with a problem, they should have a mindset that they can figure out a way to solve it.

Finally, in addition to students making connections between schoolwork and the real-world, students will be able to see the connectedness of things in
the world at large. "Educators must acknowledge...the deeply rooted characteristics that bind together the human community. We must show students that people around the world share a great many experiences.... becoming well-educated means discovering the connectedness of things." (Boyer, 1995, p. 16). If education is going to prepare its students for thoughtful, creative, and productive lives, it must help its students see how they, as people, fit together for the common pursuit of that goal.

And so where am I now?

That concludes my thoughts for the time being on teaching for educated children, although this is something I plan on always considering. These ideas are a snapshot of my mind as I approach the end of my college experience and will likely be different, if only slightly, in the near future. There are ideas within this paper that I will never change, but perhaps my methods will. I know that I want what goes on in my classroom to be firmly rooted in ideals I have for myself and how I believe children learn best; otherwise, anything that happens will be only by chance. As a teacher, I will strive to remind myself often of my ideals and continue to strive to become a more educated person myself.

Since the original question “What are the qualities of an educated person?” was posed to me over two years ago, I have wrestled with what that means for me both as a student and a teacher. I have allowed that question to occupy my thoughts as it related to many experiences both in college and elementary classrooms, from taking multiple choice tests to teaching refugee children. It has affected not only how I approach my own education, but how I think about my profession and the education of others I will come into contact with. The concept of “educated people” has given me a better way to look at being a teacher. I have realized the desire to be a teacher I have felt since I was an elementary student myself comes from my desire to assist children to
become effective students and citizens who will lead thoughtful, creative, and productive lives.
Works Cited


