

# Chalkboard

By

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If anything could dissolve “writer’s block” surely it would be an array of spring colors. Not even the bleakest grays of a winter sky, or the seemingly endless debate on educational reform, could resist the explosion of colors now rioting in northwest Arkansas. Jonquils, daffodils, hyacinths, forsythia, and Bradford Pears cry out to thirsty eyes. Soon their sisters and brothers and cousins; tulips, roses, dogwoods, daisies, alyssum, zinnias, nasturtiums, calendulas, and so forth will join the fray. For a fleeting time, lawn mowers will remain silent in reverence to tiny blooms springing forth in tender grass. Verily, verily, the Most High colored His World with the largest box of Crayolas in existence.

All the majesty of the arrival of spring with its promise of rebirth calls to my attention our school district’s motto for this year- “It takes many brush strokes to paint the portrait of a child.” It makes me reflect on the need for children to have at least a few strokes of beauty shining forth from their souls. For as exquisite and diverse as the spring flora may be, nothing is as beautiful as any child.

Note carefully that I wrote “any” child. It is an eternal truth that all children are beautiful. Any female of our species deserving to be called “mother” will attest to that fact.

I think educators need to be reminded of that fact from time to time. In the increasing pressure to guarantee that students demonstrate academic performance we may sometimes lose awareness that each student we serve is a unique and beautiful creation. It is every educator’s challenge not to lose sight of the individual blooming in a sea of seeming sameness.

I confess that if it were not for Regenia there probably would not be flowers and shrubs and ornamental trees blooming in our yard. My idea of yard work is a John Deere mower and a Stihl “weed eater”. My original idea of the perfect yard was one that could be mowed without ever backing up and one where the fence borders were trimmed down to the dirt. Yet I have come to appreciate over the years, under Regenia’s tutelage, that whatever effort and time is required to dodge the bushes, trees, and flower beds is amply rewarded by the simple beauty that lies within those obstacles.

Having flowers in your yard does require extra time and effort. There is digging, fertilizing, mulching, watering, weeding, pruning, and picking.

The same can be said about inculcating children to see the beauty within them whether or not that beauty is readily apparent for external consideration, even roses have thorns. It takes extra time and effort and some foresight.

It is evident to me that the prettiest spring yards are the ones with the greatest diversity. It is the proliferation of colors that beg attention not the green that lies beneath. Each flower with its own special color and shape contributes to the final appearance.

Surely every classroom needs to be a fertile environment where every child can bloom under the watchful care and loving attention of a master painter who doubles as a master gardener. Not to stretch the analogy too far, but perhaps every classroom needs to be a microcosm of what society could be like if the world were a spring garden.