

Kindergarten Teachers' Creed

Walt Whitman wrote a long ecstatic poem about his early years. It begins:

There was a child went forth every day;
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became;
And that object became part of him for the day, or a certain part of the day, or for many years, or stretching cycles of years...

Walt Whitman's words are cautionary, for better and for worse, to the whole world of Kindergarten Education. Betty Peck's Kindergarten Creed reminds me of this poem. 'Object relations theorists' take note! Read all of Betty's books, see her CD's, and take notes from Betty's well-documented approach to early impressions, attachment, and all of childhood education! I hope her views and practices will boom and resound throughout the world, even in far away China where inspirational revisions of outmoded educational ideas are now taking root.

Betty dared to know herself to be prime nourishment for the children's future lives. I love to hear how eager former students have been to meet with her again over the years. Even those who are now elders create very determined reunions to celebrate the bounty of life, indoors and out, which they absorbed as they responded with their whole being to her in those early days. They continue to summon her to reawaken intact from within themselves their own visceral memories of their Kindergarten days under her tutelage, and to be inspired.... to go forth... as inspirational figures for their grandchildren and families and colleagues. Betty wanted her every word and deed in the garden and classroom, and beyond, to be worthy of the children, and of everyone who came through her door. She saw herself each moment in the Kindergarten as a role model for life more abundant. Even now in her nineties, she knows herself every day to be a learning environment in collaboration with Mother Nature.

Why are adults today not encouraged to make more of themselves as the most important role models for their children? What parents and teachers wear, how they breathe and speak, the font of poems and stories they hold and share, the gently potent love that can arise between adult and child, all this too often is diminished to serve a different "virtual" goal. Trained to step aside after turning on computers or videos, an adult's unconditionally loving enthusiasm for life falls away. The generously flowing beauty, goodness and truth of life shrinks and hides in both home and classroom, and hesitates at the brink of the natural world. A bored, disempowered, uninspired teacher or parent communicates a distasteful mood to the children. The children will inevitably mirror this mood in their own souls later, if not right away. Walt Whitman's poem attests to this inevitability.

Would that every Kindergarten teacher stood like Betty Peck has countless times with her pupils to behold themselves and to read these words beautifully calligraphed around the frame of a mirror as big as they are: "Thank you for every moment that makes it possible for me to stand here and see how wonderful I am."

Would that every Kindergarten teacher would keep a collection, like Betty Peck does, of beautiful garments, hats, shoes, baskets and more to inspire children to observe more closely the playful splendor of the natural worlds. To this day Betty's cupboards overflow with the shoes, dresses, and leaf and flower crowns she donned, at dawn, to reflect for the children wonderfully

from her head to her toes the colors and mood of each different day, month and season.

Would that every Kindergarten teacher kept large golden numbers and letters around the highest rims of the classroom to be brought down at auspicious moments from these heights to participate creatively in the poems and stories and games of the day.

Would that every Kindergarten teacher carried Betty Peck's first book, **Kindergarten Education**, with them along with her GOD book for their daily bread. These books contain Betty Peck's inspired teachings, to be read, and re-read again and again.

How fortunate Kindergarten children are who go forth to meet teachers who are as insistent as Betty, without fail, that they themselves be full of unconditional love; teachers who seek with passion every day to be beautiful, true and good in themselves first, and then to shine these qualities throughout the Kindergarten classroom and play garden.

For the sake of today's children who are so needy of superb role models, may Betty Peck and her Kindergarten Creed inspire you to find joy and courage within you, even perhaps more wise and creative than you ever knew existed. Then, like Betty Peck, may you too let no one, and nothing, dim that light.

Nancy Mellon December 18th, 2012

Happy Birthdays evermore, Betty!