


## Care for Education. A Saving Grace

*La educación como cuidado. Una cualidad que salva*

*A educação como cuidado. Uma qualidade que salva*

*将教育理解为一种具有拯救特性的关怀*

التعليم كراعية. جودة تنقذ

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### Abstract

This Special Issue on Education in the Present Age needs a reflection on what nurtures education, holds it together: care. Thinking about education and care is not new, but gained renewed attention in the pandemic, when the lines between students and teachers blurred because of the collective experience we were going through. Since the early 1990's, Nel Noddings' work (1984-2013) is key for those wanting to reaffirm the caring dimensions of education. She analyzed care and its place in ethics, and developed a view on the importance of care in schooling and learning. Since then, care ethicists further developed notions of what is good care, turning those to institutional and societal contexts that promote caring communities and societies. Our essay builds on that work. It is an encounter between Robert Stake's notions of education and responsive approaches to evaluation and Merel Visse's experiences with the field of care ethics, translated for a general audience of people who are not necessarily ethicists. Our encounter resulted in the book *A Paradigm of Care*, and in Spain, resulted in a leaflet with fourteen facets of care we shared with the graduate faculty and students. These insights are meant to evoke and stimulate reflection, deliberation and listening: important to care.

**Keywords:** Care paradigm; ethics of care; responsive approaches to evaluation.

### Resumen

Este número especial sobre la educación en la época actual requiere una reflexión sobre lo que alimenta la educación, lo que la mantiene unida: el cuidado. Aunque pensar en educación y cuidados no es nuevo, cobró renovada atención en la pandemia, cuando la separación entre alumnos y profesores se difuminaron por la experiencia colectiva que estábamos viviendo. Desde principios de los años 90, el trabajo de Nel Noddings (1984-2013) fue clave para quienes querían reafirmar las dimensiones asistenciales de la educación. Esta autora analizó el cuidado y su lugar en la ética, y desarrolló una visión sobre la importancia del cuidado en la escolarización y el aprendizaje. Desde entonces, los especialistas en la ética del cuidado han seguido desarrollando nociones de lo que es un buen cuidado, orientándolas hacia contextos institucionales y sociales que promueven comunidades y sociedades solidarias. Este trabajo se basa en este estudio. Es un encuentro entre las nociones de Robert Stake sobre la educación y los enfoques receptivos de la evaluación y las experiencias de Merel Visse en el campo de la ética asistencial, traducido para un público general de personas que no son necesariamente especialistas en ética. Esta interacción dio lugar al libro *A Paradigm of Care* y, en España, a un folleto con catorce aspectos de los cuidados que compartimos con el profesorado y los estudiantes de posgrado en dicha escuela de verano. Estos aspectos pretenden estimular la reflexión, la deliberación y la escucha tan importantes para el cuidado.

**Palabras clave:** Paradigma del cuidado; ética asistencial; enfoques receptivos de evaluación

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## Resumo

Este número especial sobre a educação na época atual exige uma reflexão sobre o que alimenta a educação, o que a mantém unida: o cuidado. Este artigo é um relato de algumas experiências com os cuidados educativos. Embora pensar em educação e cuidados não seja novo, ganhou uma atenção renovada na pandemia, quando a separação entre alunos e professores se esbateu pela experiência coletiva que estávamos a viver. A partir do início dos anos 1990, o trabalho de Nel Noddings foi fundamental para quem queria reafirmar as dimensões assistenciais da educação. Esta autora analisou o cuidado e o seu lugar na ética, e desenvolveu uma visão sobre a importância do cuidado na escolaridade e na aprendizagem. Desde então, os especialistas na ética do cuidado têm continuado a desenvolver noções do que é um bom cuidado, orientando-as para contextos institucionais e sociais que promovem comunidades e sociedades solidárias. Este trabalho baseia-se nesse estudo. Trata-se de um encontro entre as noções de Robert Stake sobre a educação e as abordagens recetivas da avaliação e as experiências de Merel Visse no domínio da ética assistencial, traduzido para um público geral de pessoas que não são necessariamente especialistas em ética. Esta interação deu origem ao livro “A Paradigm of Care” e, em Espanha, a uma brochura com quatorze aspetos dos cuidados que partilhamos com os professores e os estudantes de pós-graduação nesta escola de Verão. Estes aspetos destinam-se a estimular a reflexão, a deliberação e a escuta, tão importantes para o cuidado.

**Palavras-chave:** Paradigma do cuidado; ética assistencial; abordagens recetivas de avaliação

## 摘要

这是一篇对当代教育进行反思的特殊文章，该文探讨了“关怀”如何滋养教育，维系教育这一整体。尽管对教育及关怀的思考早已不是新奇的主题，但是在疫情期间，在这个特殊的集体经历让学生及教师间的分隔变得模糊不清的时期，它又重新吸引了人们的注意力。在九十年代初期，内尔·诺丁斯的研究就在重新肯定教育支援范畴上起到了非常关键的作用。诺丁斯分析了关怀及其在伦理方面的角色，为理解关怀在学校教育和学习中的重要性延展出了崭新的视角。在此基础上，更多的关怀伦理学专家继续研究，发展出了更多的关于良好关怀的概念，并将其应用到社会和机构的背景下，以此推动团结坚定的社区及社会关系。该文章以此进行研究，将罗伯特·斯塔克的回应式教育评估概念与梅蕾尔·维塞尔在伦理支援方面的经验融合，展现给更广泛的不一定拥有伦理学专业知识的普通大众。在两种理论的互动中诞生了众多成果，如《关怀典范》这本著作和在西班牙发表的宣传册。这本关于关怀的十五个方面的宣传册是上述国际博士暑期学校教师和学生共同分享使用的。通过宣传册中涉及的多个方面，旨在鼓励更多的思考和倾听，因为对关怀来说，这些都是至关重要的内容。

**关键词:** 关怀典范、伦理支援、回应式评估

## ملخص

يتطلب هذا العدد الخاص بالمتعلق بالتعليم في عصرنا هذا التفكير في ما يغذي التعليم، وما يحافظ عليه معًا: الرعاية. على الرغم من أن التفكير في التعليم والرعاية ليس بالأمر الجديد، إلا أنه اكتسب اهتمامًا متجددًا في الجائحة، عندما كان الفصل بين الطلاب والمعلمين غير واضح بسبب التجربة الجماعية التي كنا أساسيًا لأولئك الذين أرادوا إعادة التأكيد على أبعاد الرفاهية في التعليم. قام هذا Nel Noddings نعيشها في وقت سابق، منذ أوائل التسعينيات، كان عمل المؤلف بتحليل الرعاية ومكانتها في الأخلاق، ووضع رؤية لأهمية الرعاية في التعليم والتعلم بشكل عام. منذ ذلك الحين، استمر المتخصصون في أخلاقيات الرعاية في تطوير مفاهيم حول ماهية الرعاية الجيدة، وتوجيههم نحو السياقات المؤسسية والاجتماعية التي تعزز مجتمعات ومجتمعات الرعاية. يعتمد هذا في مجال أخلاقيات الرعاية Merel Visse حول التعليم والمقاربات المستقبلية للتقييم وخبرات Robert Stake العمل على هذه الدراسة. هو لقاء بين مفاهيم A Paradigm of Care، والتي تُرجمت لجمهور عام من الأشخاص الذين ليسوا بالضرورة من علماء الأخلاق. أدى هذا التفاعل إلى ظهور كتاب وفي إسبانيا، إلى كتيب يحتوي على خمسة عشر جانبًا من جوانب الرعاية التي نشاركها مع أعضاء هيئة التدريس وطلاب الدراسات العليا في المدرسة الصيفية المذكورة. تهدف هذه الجوانب إلى تحفيز التفكير والتداول والاستماع، والتي تعتبر مهمة جدًا للرعاية.

**الكلمات الدالة:** نموذج الرعاية، أخلاقيات الرعاية، النهج المتجاوبة للتقييم

## Introduction

What is putting the present age apart? The ties no longer bind. The sinews of interdependence have lost their muscle. Education is victim of the gig economy. Who is taking care of the curriculum?

If we were to be asked, what is most central to education, many of us would say, teaching and learning. Today we argue for another right answer: Care. Giving care. Caring. Care is central to education. The responsibility of a society, the responsibility of an educational system, is taking care of children, little children, older children, humans of every age.

Our task on these pages is to examine how care is central to educating, to teaching and learning. To examine what outbids our textbooks attracting young minds.

Of course it is true that our students, while in our care, should not be hurt, being safe, not being at risk, not threatened, in a readiness, in a mood, to learn and be taught. But that is not enough. Care is not just an ambiance. It is a platform, an assemblage line of imaginations, a sculpting, a beginning and a finishing, an essential part of what is the experience of schooling and bonding and a tumbling into life pathways.

Care is an ethic. It is a right way. But is care always good? No. Care can also be bad, or coerced. Good care is to be seen as a right, guaranteed by the fact of being human. Children have rights. Learners have rights, rights to participate in the choosing to what is to pay attention. Whether the parent, whether the teacher, whether the older child recognizes that right or not, the learner is, at time, born to seize that right. Even when most constrained, even when the rules say otherwise, even when there is no time to deviate from the curriculum, learners, all of us, allow our minds to jump over the guard rails. It sometimes is a saving force in adaptation to opportunity and the avoidance of calamity.

But the force of “own choice” does not excuse the teacher or the system from extending care through every minute of the lesson, nor excuse the department head from the teacher into becoming a better caregiver. Yes, all of this is a matter of warmth, of nourishing, but care is also a matter of thinking, choosing, arranging. Arranging the furniture on the deck. Arranging preparation for the connection between today’s lesson and tomorrow’s. Arranging who should do what for whom and why. Much more thought needs be made about what a child has opportunity to learn in school and what to avoid. The work of a century of curriculum specialists needs to be read and, in some ways, challenged. Much more is being learned alone, and can be, and should be.

Hospitals are a prominent image in how care is given. They are not a suitable model for how care needs be given in education. Hospitals serve to restore health or relieve suffering. Schools serve to provide experience in creating health and well-being. These two venues, hospitals and schools, need different approaches to care. The pandemic made clear these institutions should be caring bodies, but could not always meet that standard. In hospitals and schools, professionals cared for people, students and patients, but together we all went through a collective experience that blurred previous lines. We remember sharing some of our personal experiences in class, with students, to collectively make sense of what was going on. We needed that honesty and space of listening: it would have been uncaring not showing our own precariousness. It might have lifted us above our students, instead of acknowledging our interdependence.

For teaching and learning: improvisation, initiative and participation are the ambiance of care. Listening, respecting silences and fostering safe spaces for difference, without bullying, belong in that ambiance. Not only during challenging times, but in general. Here are fourteen facets of the quality of care for the advancement of education.

### *How to help spread the Care Ethic*

1. See student spaces through a lens of care. Improving the educational system is less dependent on changing vocabulary, modelling, control and financing, than on changing instructor views of caring for students as individual but relational people.
2. Nurture Interdependence. Personal and academic knowledge remain critical to successful education of students, but equally critical is a nurturing of personal and societal skills for a lifetime of human interaction and interdependence. Acknowledging this interdependence is vital, especially in the present age.
3. *Experience Vulnerability.* In the classroom and elsewhere, vulnerabilities

such as to family fights, bullying, pandemics, and social misinformation need to be experienced in real as well as hypothetical form.

4. *Have confidence in intuition and embodied approaches.* Although there is significant attention to approaches that are inclusive to affect and non-rational dimensions in curricula and pedagogy, these are being focussed on the appropriation of knowledge. A care ethic includes creativity and embodiment, not always needing vocalization, planning and justification.

### ***Doing the care ethic***

5. *Teach Choices.* Impetuses for care are located in pedagogy and curricula as choices we make to help students outgrow immaturity, to move toward prosperity and to overcome misfortune. Decision making is not a skill, it is about a caring attunement to the situation at hand, and listening carefully to other people and pathways involved.
6. *Create Meaningful Experiences.* Regularly we fixate on language as mortar to hold together a person's education bricks, but personal experience can be just as important a bonding agent. Mastery of language and literature can be brittle and irrelevant if not translated into personal experience by students and their caregivers. Simulation and experiential approaches are worth taking seriously. Students should be allowed to live their questions.
7. *Engage Students.* The teacher should prioritize questioning, small group activity, and isolation of study time so as to facilitate student engagement and reflection.
8. *Understand Ups and Downs.* Day-to-day complexity of human interactivity provides the student with needed grasp of human integrity and letdown, but the

caregiver needs to help generalizations mature.

9. *Care for Assessment.* Assessment of educational achievement should be based partly on verbal expression and testing, but also on mannerisms, such as making suggestions, sharing, and listening, when they can be taken as evidence of comprehension.
10. *Recognize Life Choices.* The teacher's own research and development of humanistic teaching requires not only problem simulations but recognition of real choices in academic and elsewhere.
11. *Study Cases.* Case study, whether informal or scientific, is a good form of research and development to closely examine teaching and learning.
12. *Examine What's Taught.* Education as care includes the instructor organizing coursework and conversation to evoke student reflection on what the instructor teaches as well as examination of oneself as a caregiver.

### ***Change uncaring practices***

13. *Change political rubrics.* No matter if there is a human disposition to care, which some dispute, we believe care needs adaption to the educational scene, and the political rubrics for the schools should make demands for it. This includes designing caring testing policies. Through the teacher and all members of the educational system, readiness and opportunity for student learning is an essential framework for a caring academia.
14. *Prevent comparing it can be bullying.* The purpose of student assessment should seldom be to find comparative weaknesses as much as to become acquainted, in context, with different manifestations of student and teacher experience.

## Care Ethics

Many educators are not aware that there is an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the moral good called “Care Ethics” or “Ethics of Care” offering study and research on many campuses. It is not a major that students are flocking to, but a few of the young and a few of the old are hard at work considering the philosophies involved and the practical choices to be made in care needs and care-giving in medicine, public health, business, education and other disciplines.

Two years ago, we, your authors here, published a book called, *A Paradigm of Care* (Stake & Visse, 2021). We acknowledged that care can refer to many different things. Caring is a personal matter. It is all we do to live our lives as well as possible in the context of our entangledness with environments, institutions, materials and others. To teach and research as well as possible. “Teaching well” depends on care for the teacher, the researcher, the students, the classroom. It may be found in compassion or listening. It may be about becoming aware when our teaching has moved into indoctrination. It may be about re-arranging the experience of going to school so that every student is on his or her own trajectory, not competing with other students for awards and subsequent admissions.

Caring can take us into reconsidering curriculum, standardization, certification, life-long learning, the works. It involves different parts of pedagogy, but particularly getting students more actively involved in existing curricula. Caring for students by squeezing them into a deeper engagement with the teaching. We cited a *New York Times* report that many teachers feel that today’s students are disengaged. They do not attribute it to a lack of care, but a case can be made.

Care is not just a professional issue. It is a political matter as well. Care thinks of power in terms of the power to decide to be in community, to be a “We” instead of an “I”, to focus on justice and equity for all. Some even say, care is a way of *being* in the world, an ontology. We all know care begins and ends

with us, each one of us. We teachers assist others to give care. We value health care, preventive care, as well as medical care, remedial care. And with John Dewey (1902), we consider education as a major part of health care.

In education, as in human services, personal relationships consciously and unconsciously influence the quality of our work. Institutional evaluation as well as self-assessment recognize the care we give our students. Many personal interactions on school grounds remain private, but some should be considered important in institutional assessing the work of the teacher. Teacher work will reflect common expectations of human valuing. Evaluation is a search for the worth of the teaching, including its contribution to helping people make society better. It needs thinking broadly of what is good for the teacher, good for the faculty, good for the students, and good for the various missions of the school and university. The nature and practice of caring by the teachers is a factor in all aspects of the classroom and campus.

*That* caring is a matter of how we hold other persons dear, worthy of high respect, needing our handiwork. It’s important. It’s already on your To Do lists. In these next pages we want to spell out a less common way of looking at care and education. Instead of about what students have learned, we want to talk about what teachers have done to raise the quality of student experience. We want to treat teaching as care giving. The care will be about engineering the learning spaces of our schools for maturation of experiences, to find joy, to have success--for each and every student to experience the pride of successful learning.

There has long been a pedagogical approach called *experiential teaching*. It called for creating a different curriculum with new content taught with new learning experiences directly oriented to that content. Good stuff, but experiential education is not what we are talking about. Here we write *not* of that experiential learning, but of something more modest. We seek the attention to those

educators not looking for a new curriculum but are concerned about the lack of engagement by students: passive in front of screens, cell phoning, asleep—not tuning in to the *existing* syllabus. We seek a change in pedagogy, not curriculum: Engaging the student by modifying homework, rethinking on-line, and classroom learning, all to engage student experience. We see change in teaching a way of caring, a way to personalize the school experience, a way to follow the 15 beliefs described a few paragraphs back.

Experientiality is our way of linking pedagogy to care through student experience, individual and collective. We want students to gain an expanded, intricate understanding of what they are (already) being taught, the existing curriculum, using discussion, joint exploration, helping each other. We know students can go further by scrutinizing their own experiences and the experience of others—whether studying social justice or genetics or perhaps a job offer. Theirs can be better education outcomes, partly from “having been there” and having been there because their caring instructor arranged *engagement* for them. {slowly}. Over and over, hear the teacher say, (slowly) something like: “In your own words, what did Benjamin say? Maria, in your own words, what did Benjamin say?”

What is it about *experience* that helps make bafflement yield to understanding? We don’t know. We find assurance in the writing of Deborah Meier (2013), Eleanor Duckworth et al. (1990), Jean Piaget (1929), Loris Malaguzzi (Smidt, 2013), Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) and others. They lead us to believe that from experience we draw out something similar somehow matching the baffling entity, and from it we think of guesses and probes, ... to believe that experience reminds us to believe that what is *familiar* helps us understand new stuff. The experience can emerge from project work, from explicating, from team sports, from singing together: “Mine eyes hath seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.” Lots of experiences, engagements, can lead to understanding and unwrap misunderstanding.

It is not to the hospital we look to find our methods of caring in education. Perhaps it is to Mothers, not to all of them do we look, but those many mothers who rarely compare their children, the mothers who see each child as different and needing care that fits their individuality. But in care ethics, there have been scholars like Joan Tronto (1987) who distanced herself from specific acts of care like mothers and fathers do, and instead elaborated the forms of reasoning shaped by gendered experience into a moral and political theory (Gary, 2021).

Comparing does not necessarily intend to be hurtful, but nevertheless it is. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the doctrine of 'separate but equal' and ordered an end to school segregation. Its intent was to provide equitable treatment of children regardless of race. It was based on the conclusion that trying to provide equal but separate educational facilities could not help but be hurtfully discriminative and against the U. S. Constitution.

It should have gone further. Anything a teacher or school system does to compare one child to another, for whatever reason, it carries a discriminative connotation which leaves a group of children discriminated against and hurt.

Having slow reading children use special reading books is a signal that slow readers are deficient. Having the fastest arithmetic student regularly put the problem on the blackboard is discriminative, and in a month or in a year is hurtful. To have students take a test for eligibility to a gifted education class is an affront to those with lower scores, but poisons the air that all children breathe.

Comparisons are defended as facilitative of good teaching. Is sorting needed? Pedagogically, is tracking needed? Educationally, are tests needed? Standardized tests provide ranks of students. They do not tell what a student knows. They do not tell what a student can do. They do no more than compare students, one to others, on hypothetical talents. Many purport to measure

aptitude. They measure neither intellectual function, nor accomplishment nor potential--although for diverse groups, they provide scores that correlate with *some* brain function, *some* accomplishment and *some* potential.

There are winners and losers. Equity is not intended. A few test takers get special privilege, many do not. It is easy for an unthinking world to suppose that scoring is neutral--not hurtful. In many places, students are told or have access to their test-score standing. It is easy to conclude that being told over and over, "You are inferior," is damaging. What is "quality of life" surrounded by people repeatedly lowering expectations of you?

In 1970, colleague Terry Denny and Bob, with help from Craig Gjerde and Ben Stake, contracted to evaluate TCITY, the Minneapolis-St. Paul Institute for Talented Youth, a six-week gathering of several hundred high academic high schoolers for intellectual and social exploration. Terry startled the evaluation coterie by asking the question, "What is the effect on the other youth of Minneapolis-St. Paul to have hundreds of their stimulating friends disappear for the summer?" Those chosen. Those not chosen.

State tests are one problem. Teacher-made tests are a different problem. Most teachers want to give tests, if only to motivate students. They do learn something about what students have learned. Swedish evaluator Ulf Lundgren (1972) found that pacing the instruction depended on the performance of students about at the 20th percentile. Teachers cannot help but treat students differently; and they should. What they are assigned should be what they are capable of accomplishing.

It is not fair to give students different amounts of work to do, but it is not fair to give students too little work or too much. It is the teacher's job to care for the students by giving each an amount of work they can successfully accomplish.

We are not saying teachers should test less, but they should discriminate less. They are obligated to give grades, and especially with big classes, they need tests. It is expected that

students will reveal their scores to other students, but teachers should give them little opportunity, including giving different items/questions to different students. It is not fair to give tests that some students find grossly easy or grossly difficult. It leads to the indignity of the schools.

Is there need to discriminate *among students*? Do we have to compare as much as we do? A great deal of deep thinking involves some kinds of comparison. The same about thinking in general. We talk about living, and about ethics, about caregiving, with attention to function, and problematics, and context--and often we compare with other modes of living and ethics and caregiving. I am persuaded that it is impossible to think, without comparing.

We comparing people a lot. And it regularly means putting some people on pedestals and putting other people down. We compete, partly to appear better than others. I do not suppose we as a people could compete less, or compare less, to think less of what is better and what is inferior. But I wonder if we could be less hurtful. Less hurtful.

It is not hurtful to say that Japanese cars are superior, or that Hershey chocolate is inferior, or that Norway or New Zealand would be a better place to live. But it is hurtful to say that Benjamin is a slow learner. Some stereotyping is inevitable, but we need restraint.

Partly because of national and state standards, we compare students unnecessarily. It is of little help to a youngster to know he or she was at the top again. It regularly hurts students to be shown they were wrong again and again. Standardized tests are norm-referenced, they do not tell what a child has learned, only how many others have more correct answers than he or she. Grades too tell almost nothing about what a student knows.

Basing school experience on *care* needs to be thought of partly in terms of individual students. For considering how a poor and troubled boy might get a better life start, please

consider Adam in the case study below (Stake, 1992).

### ***Adam: A Sixth Grader in an Urban School***

At 8:30 a.m. on Thursday morning, Adam shows up at the cafeteria door. Breakfast is being served but Adam doesn't go in. The woman giving out meal chits has her hands on him, seems to be sparring with him, verbally. And then he disappears. Adam is one of several siblings, they arrive at school in the morning with less than usual parent attention. Short, with a beautifully sculpted head and Gerri-curl, solid body, baggy black sweats and sneakers, and full of energy, Adam is a person to be noticed.

At 8:55 he climbs the stairs to the third floor with other upper graders, turning to block the girls behind him and thus a string of others. Adam manages to keep the girls off-balance until Ms. Crain, one of the teachers, spots him and gets traffic moving again.

The "augmented staffing room" for Adam and 15 other "at risk" children is at the top of the stairs. It's Mr. Garson's fifth-sixth-grade room. Garson notices Adam, has a few quiet words with him before a paternal shove toward the room. Adam disappears into the closet and sheds his oversize Bulls coat. Garson tells him to get the dustmop and clean the floor near his desk, the closest to the door. A dozen or so children are on time, milling about. Adam gets the mop and runs it into the feet of those nearest. The hurly-burly of the hallway is dying away and the children within this room are becoming quiet too. Intercom: "Ms. Hampton, please come to the office."

It's a typical elementary school room with full windows on one side, blackboards across the front, homemade and purchased posters almost everywhere. Near the door, two twigs of cotton are labeled "Cotton." Movable desks are clustered to each side of a commons, eight on each side, most facing the blackboard. It's a big room for so few youngsters.

"Excuse me! Excuse me!" It's Garson's way of quieting the class. A few students whisper and Garson works at them to get things

straightened out. He has prewarned me how important it is to reestablish an aura of discipline. At 9:10, two tardy children arrive. He asks for their excuse. The girl was getting a younger sister to school. The boy ignores the question and is sent to the hall "to straighten your face." It becomes apparent to me the class is waiting for opening ceremonies via intercom. Adam sits quietly at his desk.

Garson announces, "DuSable High School Band and Gospel Choir will be here today" and mentions Tina Turner. Although he has taught here many years, I (Bob) have difficulty understanding his Caribbean dialect. The students show no sign of not understanding him. Perhaps Garson is asking who will sing. Adam shows no interest.

It is 9:15 and still no intercom broadcast. "Well, we'll start the lesson. Open your reader to page 169, 'Strange Things in Space.'" The room is very quiet; it's easy to hear the street traffic. "Michael, put your book so Jon can read it too. What strange things in space? Can you guess? We need a prediction." Nobody predicts. Adam is paging through his book. "Unidentified flying objects?" Garson tells a news story about a driver accosted by space creatures. A few boys grin but not Adam.

With quiet again, Garson grumbles about the lost time. "Now, how many want lunch?" Only Annalee raises her hand. One by one, he checks each child, bantering, loosening up the kids, getting away from the artificiality of the announcements. "How about a hot dog, Adam?" "Naw, burger 'n fries." "Well, you'll have to go somewhere else for those. Adam, would you sit at your own desk!" He does not.

"Darci, would you read 'Strange Things in Space?'" Her second sentence refers to junk food. Garson breaks in. "What is junk food?" No one answers. "Candy and cookies and anything not the regular food we're supposed to eat." Darci reads on. When she encounters a difficult word, Garson supplies it. And he pushes the rest to interpret what they are reading. "What do they mean, space junk?" The intercom: "Teachers, reminding you to send your absence slips to the office."



"Millions of stars and what else? There is even a special star you can't see at night. And shooting stars." Darci finishes the paragraph. "You can learn quite a bit by looking at stars. You can make a map of them."

"Okay, Adam, you read." Adam reads, "The earth moves around the sun." And onward, words frequently supplied by Garson but reading at good pace and with a sense of sentence. When he reaches the use of binoculars and telescopes, Garson takes over and tries to draw the students into prediction of what they would see with binoculars and telescopes. "Yes, they make the stars look larger." He wants a prediction also of what space junk they will see. "At a planetarium--you've all been there--you can see how the stars move in the sky. And their size and color. What did Adam read about the name we call people who spend their lives studying the stars? Astronomers. Astronomers use very large telescopes." Everyone is quiet. "Say it, students. I want just the smart students to say it." "Astronomers." (Pause.) "Thank you, Adam."

Kim reads but is soon interrupted. "Why are the stars seen in different places every night? Yes, they move around. What is the key word here? They move, don't they?" And after something about an observatory at the top of a mountain: "Why is the air clear atop the mountain? Who says because it's so high? That's right. Closer to the ground you have all that stuff in the atmosphere. Kerstin put your hands down. Why do we have falling stars? Come on. You have to know that, you who'll be seventh graders next year. Because they are old? No. Do you think they just say, 'I'm tired of you, Mama, gonna fall now.' Think." And Kerstin reads some more. "And why is the sun yellow? And not blue or green. Make some suggestions. Okay, look it up in the book. Page 170 tells you why stars fall." And then he goes into something about the song, "Catch a Falling Star" and how Adam might write a Valentine to his girl and want to send her a falling star. Kim reads aloud again. "And on page 172 you'll find space junk: dust and rocks. Now you need to know the difference between

meteor and meteorite. Meteor and meteorite. Work on those definitions."

Adam is back at his own desk. Annalee reads again. The class is following along. All turn the page together. Mr. Garson helps Adam keep oriented to his book, maybe partly because Garson was forewarned I am trying to keep a hidden eye on Adam. It is 9:55. "Put your books away. Straighten your desks around." Adam continues to read. "Get in line." Adam stands talking to Garson turning away but gradually leaning against him. ... gradually leaning against him.

All off to the washrooms, Mr. Garson ahead, Adam trailing last. They pass a line of eighth-grade boys. Adam succeeds in drawing their eyes, turns to them, thrusts his pelvis, covers genitals with both hands, and says something of which I only hear ". . . pussy." A huge smile on his face, a few smirks on theirs.

The Black Heritage music program gets a fine response from the several hundred students. Adam, however, sits 90 minutes without expression, mostly with arms folded. On the way back, during the washroom stop, another teacher grabs Adam and reprimands him. Mr. Garson takes Adam into the corner and talks to him several minutes, then puts him at the room's Apple 11 terminal. He acquiesces, works attentively while the other children study English until noon. The chapter theme is Winter Weather. Adam misses the orientation to "topic sentences" and a long discussion about stuffing broken windows at home with paper and plastic and taping bullet holes in project windows to keep out the winter wind.

Detail of the afternoon more or less mirrored that of the morning. Adam remained unsubmitive, susceptible to special discipline, always a potential disruption to lessons. On the way to my car I thought: Adam is not a typical youngster and Mr. Garson not a typical teacher and this perhaps was not a typical day. Yet it is apparent that this teacher had a major task in working with the personality and the needs of the boy--and other teachers have similar unending responsibility for the socialization of

children and the restoration of a few hobbled lives. Mr. Garson had a small and responsive group to work with, including Adam. Adam was overresponsive. He seemed not to lack aspiration or self-esteem. Somehow he appeared to me to be a person who would impact people's lives. What would be his mission? Today it seemed far from the school's mission.

Like that of other teachers, Mr. Garson's work appeared confrontive. Some of the time it required confrontation with students but regularly it confronted demands of the community, the children, the school, and the school reform effort. Cultivating the academic talents of kids was important in Mr. Garson's room, but responding to their personal and social needs apparently often took precedence.

Deadlines for this evaluation case study (I was at Harper School just 10 days) allowed only a cursory study of teaching, much of it spent in Mr. Garson's room. In other rooms, I observed what I perceived to be sometimes strong and sometimes ineffective instruction. The principal's remarks confirmed a considerable range. It was my judgment that teacher competence, however imperfect, was not a major obstacle to raising student achievement at Harper to District goal targets.

So what is right? Everyone is playing the role according to script. The school is there for academic and warehousing reasons. The teacher teaches science of a sort. The students are compliant., most of them, most of the time. Garson shepherds them. He is confrontive, but negotiating. Adam appears impulsive, but not hell-bent. He leans against Garson's leg, and feels the care.

The School System sets low but unreachable goals, expecting that test scores will show the health of the system. The system is not based on care. Harper's principal is known for "tough-love," a form of caring. All of Adam's older brothers are in prison. Did Garson help keep Adam free? We don't know. Would knowing the difference between meteor and meteorite have helped? Would better care

have made a difference. Shouldn't we have tried?

## Control of Education

American schools are said to be locally controlled. Indeed there are local school boards, but seldom is heard an aspirational voice nor seen an actual monitoring of what is taught and what is learned. A few parents speak up at board meetings. Administrators minimize the discussion of issues and proposals for change. State offices publish standards and require testing, are not involved in school management. Teachers are largely left to wend their ways through experience and custom and a wavering of student attention. The engineer of the train of education has a hand on a deadman's switch, things change if the heart fails, not for the better.

Teachers Colleges teach their future students what fits the expectations of college readiness, but they find little support at their new schools. Most teachers would like to make changes, and would be able to teach more to their liking if they could expel recalcitrant students. The teachers resist little to standardized achievement testing because it provides some help at controlling student behavior.

But a standardized curriculum and testing are the most egregious obstacles to heartfelt care for students. Standardization requires that some student will be treated as superior and some inferior. A teacher can deeply sympathize with students hurt and embarrassed but is forced to defend the discrimination.

Teachers deserve care as much as students. They are overworked and underpaid, compared to others with equivalent skills and job loyalty. They are treated as incompetent because many of their students perform poorly on tests, a simplistic evaluation of their work.

Teachers for the most part have personalities that support a change in educational ethic away from academic skill toward caring for better growth and development of the students. They have pride in their investments in disciplinary knowledge

and teaching skills, but also can see the inappropriateness of current standards. It would not be easy to adapt assignments more in line with student interest and willingness to work. Some student are lazy and some ready to oppose whatever the teachers do. But only a very few are too lazy to do anything or insistent on opposing everything. Good teachers at the Summerhill School in England and the Reggio Emilia Schools in Italy have years of experience of educating along lines of student initiative.

Let us think about a *hypothetical* teaching situation at any school, where a class has just ended. Let's imagine this is how the experience went. The reading assignment had been well chosen. The lecture was pertinent and explanatory, with good graphics. The instructor treated the students fairly. But. But. But did each student take a step toward becoming educated? Was each student moving at least inches toward becoming educated? Of course, we cannot know, but was personal endowment given half a chance?

To care for our students, especially for those now minimally engaged, we should make school a better life experience. There should be an equity of rewards. Teachers should look to the humanities to reimagine teaching. Science and technology have pushed us toward measurement, toward comparison. We should find in the humanities a push toward justice and interdependability.

How can the instructor arrange participation to be a more cherishable learning experience? Does he/she rely only on exposing the students to lecture and textbook? Some of that is needed. But it's often too distant an experience.

Did some students need prodding: to think? ...to apply? ...to critique? to respond with a counter-claim? Was the main concept sculpted so that each of the students became engaged in his or her own thinking? Can that historical moment be posed as a value position more than just as a fact? The main question is not: Was each student exposed to the subject matter of the lesson? It is: Did each student

engage in some intellectual work, such as: Paraphrasing? Thinking of examples? Was each student encouraged to study together, to grapple intellectually?

These questions call for skills not easy for a teacher. But if deemed important, change can happen. Small changes are possible, by including arguments and puzzlements in assignments, by using more class time for student expression, by quizzes where not all questions have right answers, and by raising expectation of learning together, particularly, as you know, with projects. Especially difficult it is to arrange for top and bottom students simultaneously to have good experiences.

What we want to say follows our title, Care for the Sake of Education. Teachers care a lot. So do all educators and supporters of education. But they care for different things, not always for the individual student. We would like to help move the concept and practice of education further into the care ethic. We want teaching to move toward self-interpretation and the healing of misunderstanding. We are not pushing for more hugs, a greater sentimentality. We do not want to do battle with people who prioritize competition and employability and scholarship. We do not urge the schools be isolated from matters political and personally private, however good that might be.

The curriculum should be described partly in pedagogical terms. Pedagogy should be re-examined, with an emphasis on individualized student experience. Bologna to the contrary, isn't standardization of the curricula a problem? Doesn't too much "code" choke the context? Don't too many technical terms choke experience? Do you not agree that our pedagogy should give greater attention to the students' judgment of what to dig into? We should recognize the greater understanding possible by couching teaching in student engagement. Our plea is not to teach human relationships but to honor human experience, as we teach math and science and the humanities.

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