

Purposeful Parenting

P

Purposeful parenting and excellent teaching share more similarities than most people recognize. Being both a teacher and a parent of two grown children, I feel that my comparisons are not only credible, but quite accurate. While parenting my daughters through the different stages of their development, I definitely had both “aaah!” moments as well as “aha” ones. Let me explain and see if you can recognize some of these signature experiences in your own lives.

Our awakening or, aha, moment came after my husband and I brainstormed, talked to professionals and friends, then finally found a strategy that eased our daughter’s anxiety, enabling her to thrive in her new environment.

Children come to school with their own personalities, strengths, role models, and experiences and it is up to the teacher to create an environment that respects those differences while helping children to

Children come to school with their own personalities, strengths, role models and experiences and it is up to the teacher to create an environment that respects those differences...

When my younger daughter began kindergarten, after having completed two years of part time Pre-K, I thought, yes, she is going to adjust beautifully to her new school and teacher. Well, her transition was terrific for two days when suddenly she decided that school, her teacher, her clothes, and her new shoes were all horrible. Oh no, what to do? We tried to reason, read books, and even offered incentives. Well yes, they were bribes, but nothing worked. Our hearts broke as we sent a screaming child into school each morning. The aaah! moment was our disbelief that she would not conform to her new environment in the same way that her older sister had. Should we change schools? Talk to the teacher? Up the ante on our reinforcers? Or simply try to think of our child as an individual with unique needs? In other words, we needed to think outside of the box, we needed to search for strategies that would ease our child’s discomfort and fear.

conform to safety standards, intellectual challenges, social interactions, and creative endeavors. The aaah! moment for most teachers happens the first few days or weeks of school when he/she realizes that his/her class does not fit into any one particular mold. Hopefully, the aha moment occurs as the teacher develops strategies that will facilitate learning and adjustment for all students. Both parents and teachers must recognize and applaud individual differences.

Our responsibilities, whether as teachers or parents, should include establishing connections and common threads so that all of our children will be able to have their own aha moments for a long time to come.