

THE COLORED CHALK BOX

My teacher has several names: James W. Kidd, Ph.D., Jim Kidd and Jimmy. Although I admire and respect James W. Kidd, Ph.D., his wisdom, his insights and his knowledge of the philosophical/psychological foundations of education and I appreciate Jim Kidd for his being-behind us in class (giving us background information and sharing thoughts about the possibilities we have for the future) I am most captivated by Jimmy. Jimmy is the playful side of my teacher, the side that brings fun into the classroom, the breath of fresh air. He keeps things in their proper perspective. Life (being a doctoral student at USF) is so serious most of the time, as it has to be. We sometimes forget how wonderful it is to be alive — to enjoy being a human being.

Jimmy brings a colored chalk box to class, with a palate and everything (an antique stand up chalkboard and an old upright brief case). He actually spends time rummaging through the box looking for just the right color to draw Janese's portrait (sometimes he doesn't get the right color but he uses the one he chooses anyway, calling it the color he wants it to be. He doesn't even get mad when he chooses the wrong color). He makes beautiful pictures of Janese and he takes time to make sure that he does a good job. His drawings are awful (sorry) but the spirit they possess are wonderful. They illustrate his stories perfectly. Sometimes James W. Kidd, Ph.D. apologizes for Jimmy's artistic talents but he doesn't have to.

When Jimmy is having fun with challenging concepts, he allows his students to have fun with them too. We want to understand and broaden our horizons with new and energizing ideas. Jimmy facilitates our doing just that by filling the absorption time, the needed to absorb what James W. Kidd, Ph.D. has just said, with a bit of carefree antics (I, at least, appreciate the time you give me to assimilate your ideas).

Young children are usually very open to ideas of any kind. As we get older, it is harder to be receptive to new ideas. We have a tendency to want to stay with the tried and true ideas we have grown up with. When Jimmy is up in front of the class, bringing youthfulness into the room, he indirectly encourages us to be youthful, open to new ideas. He gives the feeling that the concepts are within our grasp and we do grasp them!

I have never felt talked down to. I have felt flattered that Jimmy feels free enough to enjoy his thoughts and share them with me. Thank you, Jimmy for giving me some new ways to look at things. You have broadened my horizons. You have given me more possibilities to deal with my future.
You are a true educator.

Antonia Dill
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