



Danette Littleton

Abstract

What we believe about children guide how we teach them, the learning environments we construct for them, and what we teach: What children should know? What skills must they master? Unexpressed, but no less meaningful, is the interdependent relationship between teacher and learner. The manner in which we relate to children shapes the success of our teaching and, more importantly, their lives. Through narratives and vignettes, this presentation seeks to reveal the behavioral needs of children. We are child-watchers, professional observers of children. Ours is the special responsibility to see a child as that child needs to be seen through the transparent lens of compassion and respect. Children with hurt feelings want comfort and consolation. Children who come to school from chaos and violence at home earn for patient understanding. For some children, their emotional lives go unnoticed until a teacher pays attention. Compassionate teaching begins at this level of awareness, continues onward pedagogy, and invites research interests in children's morality and spirituality.

Auto-ethnology and narrative methodologies offer a broad range of ways to seek understanding of children's hearts and minds. In this era of privatization, standardization, excessive testing, and data-driven curriculum, caring for children's sensibilities has never been more important.

Bio

Danette Littleton earned a Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin and Bachelor and Master Degrees in Music Education from The Florida State University. Electing early retirement as Professor of Music Education at the University of Tennessee, Dr. Littleton turned her attention to teaching children music in elementary schools with culturally diverse students from preschool and kindergarten through grade five. Continued interactions with infants and young children supported her interest in children's musicality and led to studies in companion disciplines in psychology, sociology, and philosophy. Danette's book, *When Music Goes to School: Perspectives on Learning and Teaching*, integrates her imaginative teaching practices, scholarship, and research with a deep and insightful understanding of how children learn and how best to teach them.