

**If you want to understand the difference a teacher teaching in an honest system can make, read these words from a dedicated servant of education who now spends his time trying to expose the fraud in the NY schools. But do not expect to find many of his kind anywhere in the USA since White Chalk Crime has systematically eliminated them from our midst. Until the public demands that we eliminate White Chalk Criminals rather than dedicated teachers, expect teachers who either “go along to get along” or who naturally lack the skills and empathy to help children soar. NAPTA**

## Education Notes Online

### Norman Scott hits another one out of the ball park

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Ed Notes provides information on current issues and on organizing activities around fighting for public education in NYC and beyond. If you are a teacher, help promote Ed Notes to your colleagues. GET INVOLVED IN THE STRUGGLE

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*Tuesday, November 3, 2009*

### So, You Get a Phone Call by Norm Scott

Last night I received a phone call from a former student who was in my 6th grade class in 1973-74. He had just been released from a NY State prison after serving 27 years for murder and was in a shelter (not a good thing) until he finds a place to live. We stayed in touch all these years and I visited him twice in various prisons (he seemed to be in just about every state prison possible). He has been denied parole at least 6 times and he was somewhat shocked when it was granted so suddenly on the 7th try. He was released with just about nothing and with little time to notify people (though it turns out that the weird phone numbers popping up on out caller id were from the prison).

His family was even more shocked when he turned up at their door. Why he is in a shelter? It seems the family basically forgot he existed.

I knew lots of people in his family. I taught his brother and his nephew and knew his older sister, who was a political activist associated with the Progressive Labor Party. In the 1975 teachers strike, she came with a bull horn to rally community support for us.

A political note: These type of family associations are only possible when a teacher spends many years in one school, something that seems to be out of style with the ed reformers.

He had taken up a hobby in prison of building a miniature farm out of Popsicle sticks. He sent me the entire farm, which I still have in my basement. Beautiful work.

He was one of the more difficult kids to deal with and had disrupted many class rooms in the past years (that was before special ed). That class was very difficult, with more than a few kids ending up dead or in prison. I took his behavior issue off the table by buying lizards and some math manipulatives and freeing him from his seat or having to do any formal work in class, though he was free to join us when he wished. He had already been held back twice I think (the maximum possible - see BloomKlein, we didn't have automatic social promotion - but it was enough. You couldn't do it a third time and have a 13 year old sitting in 6th grade forever.

He dropped out at 14. He studied acting and used to come to my classes in later years and do acting exercises. At times he went on trips with us. Then came drugs. And murder. One time he called me on Thanksgiving from jail and said there were 9 guys from the projects in the same cell block. He put some of them who knew me on the phone.

His scores on the test the year I had him were awful, as expected. Obviously my fault. No merit bonus for me. And maybe even a firing for being such a bad teacher as to not get good results, other than to get a child who had disrupted every class to function effectively in a social setting. How do you measure that?

I can't tell you what he learned in class that year. Maybe to trust a teacher enough to stay in touch for 35 years. Obviously, the long-term results were not good. But I can only look at the year he spent with me as his teacher and I rate that pretty high. What would I have done if I had been offered

more money for getting his score up? Or if threatened with being fired for not?

Posted by Norm @ ed notes online at

<http://ednotesonline.blogspot.com/2009/11/so-you-get-phone-call.html>

**DAVID PAKTER** said...

Norm Scott and I both entered teaching in the late 1960's, at a time in History when the world had gone Mad- the horrendous and unnecessary carnage and human slaughter of the Viet Nam War."

Of course we have since learned that Viet Nam was not some exception or aberration in time or place, but rather the rule.

Every generation seems to have its "Legend in his own Mind", some "Great Decider" who knows what is best for the rest of the people in the world, or perhaps just one City, or just one particular schools system, in one particular East Coast City.

"L'histoire se repete" like a turning wheel. And how many countless times do things end up where they started- except worse than before.

The final paragraph of "So, You Get A Phone Call" is sufficient to tear one's Heart out and leave one in tears.

In my almost 40 years teaching in New York City and working in some of the toughest inner City schools, I have been privileged to work with countless thousands of very hard working, very competent and very dedicated teachers. And some were far above competent and far beyond dedicated who saw and treated their students as if their own flesh and blood.

Bone of their bone- flesh of their flesh- blood of their blood. And all blood is the same brilliant red when people are bleeding and in need of help and hope and some healing when injured and in pain.

But once in a while you encounter that very rare and exceptional Educator like Norm Scott who does not simply go the proverbial extra mile but those extra one hundred thousand miles for his students.

People like Norm Scott never asked for or required "Merit pay", perks and carrots dangled before their face to push themselves to the limit.

They did that instinctively, automatically, because they were not in Education for the money but because it was a driving mission to even the playing field for all people- regardless of the color of their skin or their ethnicity or where they were born or whether they spoke with an accent.

It is a shame the present Chancellor chose to always place his own children in elite private schools, isolated from "bad influences". His children might have learned something about Life in the real world and also something called humanity and triumphing over impossible odds when all seemed hopeless.

As I said there are many ultra dedicated teachers in the NYC Public Schools System. And then there are the Norm Scott's.

They are in a class by themselves.

This short article is long on Wisdom. Indeed could any teacher in this world ever do as much for God's children, whether rich or poor, as Norm Scott did for almost 37 years.

Bravo and Bravo encore, Norman, for penning one of the most poignant, powerful and relevant statements that has ever appeared on Education Notes.

It should be reprinted in the millions and distributed worldwide like the famous essay "A Message to Garcia" about another man who had an impossible mission assigned to him and fulfilled that mission valiantly and without so much as questioning was it really all that important.

Some people in this world never need to be told what do. They know it before they are even asked.

Thank the gods for the Norman Scott's of this world. Where would all God's innocent children be without such rare human beings.

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