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from the editor



I subscribe to a service that sends a quote to my Inbox each week day. These quotes are mostly to do with happiness, and serve to remind me daily to reflect on my mental state and how I am managing my life. Here is one I received recently.

Since every man is obliged to promote happiness and virtue, he should be careful not to mislead unwary minds, by appearing to set too high a value upon things by which no real excellence is conferred.

— Samuel Johnson

I think this quote has particular significance for teachers and is worth thinking about at this time when many people make resolutions for the new year. You may not believe that promoting happiness and virtue is your most pressing professional goal, but then again, perhaps every other more concrete objective ultimately leads to happiness and virtue, and so it is an admirable overarching goal that every teacher could aspire to. If you were to replace "every man" with "every teacher" and think of students as the "unwary minds" (maybe parents should be included in that category) then this bit of wisdom could make you ask: *Am I setting too high a value upon things by which no real excellence is conferred? What is truly important to the present lives and future success of the children I am tasked with evaluating each day? Am I helping to develop strong values of honesty, co-operation and respect in my students? And are they happy? Or, am I emphasizing outdated skills and competitive attitudes, and assigning tasks that lead anywhere but to happiness and virtue?*

At this point in the school year, when you have had time to establish relationships with the young people who gather around you each day, and classroom routines that help to make your time together run smoothly, perhaps some time is available for reflection and a checking in with the lofty goals that inspired you to become a teacher. I hope you take this opportunity to reaffirm those goals, celebrate your successes and make action plans to promote happiness and virtue.

Best wishes for good health and happiness in 2012.

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