Voices

Young Children

MIMI BRODSKY CHENFELD

RJ OK

Here we are writing little initials next to the kids' names: LD, EMR, SBD, ADD, EI, POHI, VIP.

VIP? No, sorry. VIP doesn't mean Very Important Person. It now refers to Visually Impaired. Get with it! You have to keep up with these acronyms, these latest catchwords.

Here come the kids. Each an original. None interchangeable. Each unique. The writing on the wall reads: There is only one of you in all of time.

. . . . .

Here comes RJ. Third grade. Room 104.

We're confronted with RJ's file.

RJ. Sometimes he's clear-headed. Sometimes he's fuzzy (Just what is his learning style anyway?)

RJ. Full of energy (sometimes), passion (sometimes), motivation (sometimes), laughter (sometimes), impatience (sometimes)...

RJ. Today he is sharing, caring, giving, loving. Yesterday—the pits.

Sometimes he's all ears. Sometimes he's Hearing Impaired. Today RJ's on! Instantly, he caught the point of the differences between fact and fiction. The examples he offered were brilliant.

Yesterday, RJ was off. He spent forever getting his time on task. He barely answered the study questions after the reading story.

RJ. Sometimes he pays attention. Sometimes it's out the window. Sometimes he's cooperative. Sometimes he's competitive. Sometimes he's as coordinated as Baryshnikov. Sometimes he's as clumsy as Chevy Chase.

RJ. What to do with his file?

. . . . .

Which T-shirt shall I wear for this challenge? I'm torn between the red T-shirt with the black letters that reads: All of our kids are prodigies (Yiddish proverb) and the yellow one with the green letters that reads: Whatever the question, the answer is love.

Wear them both as you stir the alphabet letters in a soup bowl. Mix and stir well.

See which letters float to the top. Be patient. Today four letters emerge and rise to the surface: RJ OK.

Mimi Brodsky Chenfeld is a teacher, writer, and national consultant. She is the author of Creative Activities for Young Children and Teaching Language Arts Creatively (2nd ed.), both published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. She can be reached at 2670 Halleck Dr., Columbus, OH 43209.

IN THE MAY ISSUE...

"Building A Culture for Change"

Educational Leadership explores ways, from the conceptual to the practical, of bringing about change within schools, including:

* suggestions for reframing reform, renewing our sense of purpose, and eventually transforming our schools, from Terry Deal,
* descriptions of an extended partnership among teachers, administrators, and university professors, from Michael Fullan, Barrie Bennett, and Carol Rolheiser-Bennett,
* new understanding of the role of will and skill in sustaining change, from Matthew Miles and Karen Seashore Louis,
* the concept of “value-added leadership” from Tom Sergiovanni,

Plus Lorrie Shepard's synthesis of research on retention, just in time for the troublesome decisions of May.

Plus provocative contrasts in reviews of Thriving on Chaos and Among Schoolchildren.

COMING IN SEPTEMBER: "Student Success"—Start the year right with dozens of reports on early intervention strategies, study skills, and other programs that pay off in increased learning.

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