

Educating Angels: Teaching for the Pursuit of Happiness (Our National Conversation)

Tony Armstrong Ph.D



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What sort of education would be worthy of angels? Tony Armstrong argues it would be an education focused on helping them achieve their deepest aspiration: happiness. Contemporary education ignores the question of children's happiness. Schools aren't in the happiness business. For the most part, they're in the preparing-workers business. Children are treated more as means to economic ends than as ends in themselves in today's schools.

Armstrong doesn't think this moral lapse is due to not caring enough about our children. He says it has more to do with people being unaware that schools could do far more than they do to improve kids' chances for realizing happiness. If parents understood schools *could* do more for the happiness of their children, he believes they would insist on it.

Armstrong offers a practical understanding of happiness as a feeling you want to keep feeling and sees the pursuit of happiness as the steps you take to feel better than you do at present. Seen in this light, empowering students' lifelong pursuit of happiness involves helping them gain the insights and skills that allow them to feel as they choose from moment to moment as well as in the long-term. He points to classroom-tested methods that have proven quite effective in helping kids feel better. And also behave better, learn better, relate better, and treat others more kindly.

Dr. Armstrong presents a kindergarten-through-college pedagogy that would result in happier people and better societies. He paints an inspiring picture of an education worthy of angels and a future worthy of humanity.



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