

What Do Our Children Want?

By Kofi Essien

posted April 2013, OLE Ghana

Granted that the human being will like to do more of what it wants and is comfortable with I ask this question, "What do our children want in a school setting?" Perhaps finding answers to this would get them to like schooling and take to learning lifelong. As I looked for answers everywhere I could, I decided to Google the internet and came across a posting by Angela Maiers on Sep 6, 2011 in the *Blog, Family & Parenting, Lifestyle*. It had to do with 12 most important things children want from their teachers. It got me to reflect on my own 17 years plus as a teacher in the classroom as well as my more than 10 years as a trainer of teachers in 21st century teaching and learning approaches.

Ungar Michael in an article published on April 12th 2010 on *Nurturing Resilience in Psychology Today* tells us that a child is engaged at school when she attends regularly, thinking to herself, "School is doing me some good" and feeling like people at her school value what she has to offer. In other words, she has to behave, think, and feel in ways that tell us she is connected. Ungar further adds that naively, we think we can make kids behave, think and feel engaged by offering them DJ's and bouncy castles while what they really want is the feeling that they belong, that what they do at school matters not just to themselves, but to their parents and teachers too and the reassurance that what they're learning is actually going to make their life a little better.

So what are the 12 most important things Angela Maiers says in her postings that captured my attention and which I want to share with you?

1. Greet me each day. Wish me good morning, and send me off with a "see ya tomorrow."
2. Smile. When you look at me, let me see happiness in your eyes.
3. Give me your attention. Sit and talk with me privately; even if only for a second.
4. Imagine with me. Help me dream of things I might be able to do; not just the things I need to do now.
5. Give me challenging content and assignments. Show me how to handle it. Teach me what to do.
6. Ask about me. Inquire about my weekend, the game I played, the places I go. It shows you care about my life.
7. Let me have time. Time to let things sink in. Time to think. Time to reflect, process, and play.
8. Demand of me. Hold me accountable to high standards. Don't let me get away with what you know I am capable of doing better.
9. Notice Me. Leave special messages in my desk or locker. Just a quick note that says you notice something right.
10. Let me ask the questions. Even if they are off topic. It will show that I am thinking about new perspectives, curious, and willing to learn more. Let me have the chance to show what I am wondering about, not just what I know.



11. Engage me. I came to you in love with learning, keep me excited, and keep me wanting more.

12. Trust me. Believe that I can do it. Allow me the chance. I promise to show you I can.

While I reflected on these twelve points it dawned on me that yes our children appreciate the beautiful classrooms, the free text and notebooks, the free uniforms and food. But over and above that what they want is a friend; a true friend who will understand and journey with them through their learning process. One, who will share their joys, hopes, aspirations, as well as endure their frustrations and challenges with them.

A true friend who will hold their hands and urge them on to aspire for the heavens even if today they have no food to eat or a book to write in or a good roof over their heads. One who will not mock them because they are wearing tattered clothes: one who will help them laugh their hunger and frustrations away with their kind words. One who will recognize the little good in them and help them grow it into the bigger dreams; one who will make them want to come to school even if they are sick.

Are you that friend? That is what I believe our children want. A true friend.