

Teaching values for life!

A six-part series by David Koutsoukis

4. Be the learning kind!

Encourage your students to become lifelong learners by being positive about learning

It is said that Albert Einstein was unable to speak properly when he was nine years old. Apparently his parents and teachers thought he might be mentally disabled. Isn't it amazing the disguises that some of the world's most brilliant minds have? Perhaps you have some 'Young Einsteins' in your class and don't know it!

There are many things that I admire about Einstein, including his enquiring mind and attention to detail. One of things I really like is his quote that says 'I have no special talents, I am only passionately curious'. Don't you love that? Not only does this illustrate his humility, but I would argue that this quote outlines one of our key objectives as educators—to encourage our students to be 'passionately curious'.

Learning heroes

Albert Einstein is one of my learning heroes. This phrase was coined by another of my learning heroes, educator Glenn Capelli. A 'learning hero' is someone whom you admire and can learn from. Learning heroes are not necessarily teachers (although many of mine are) but people we can learn from through their words and actions. Some examples from throughout history

which fit the 'Six kinds of best' theme include: Helen Keller (be kind to yourself), Florence Nightingale (be kind to others), Steve Irwin (be kind to the environment), Edward de Bono (the learning kind), Thomas Edison (the achieving kind) and Mahatma Gandhi (the community kind).

I have found that students relate very well to learning concepts if they are linked in context to real-life examples such as learning heroes. This has particularly been the case with low-achieving students who are good at sport. I have used many examples of the positive attributes of successful sportspersons (such as footballers) to illustrate the kind of qualities students will need if they want to 'be like them'.

Examples might include values such as persistence, dedication, cooperation and teamwork.

What learning heroes can you use with your students?



Be a learning hero

Another of my biggest learning heroes was my late father, Albert Koutsoukis (yes, another Albert). Dad was also a teacher who was passionate about learning and, in particular, about history. I have vivid memories of Dad's huge book collection, and of him sitting in his chair reading the *The rise and fall of the Third Reich*. Dad was so passionate about history that he wrote some 52 books on the subject!

So, what did I learn from Dad about learning? Books are good. Reading is what we do every day. Ask lots of questions. (We used to play a game called 'Questions' where Dad would test my knowledge.) Knowledge will help you be successful. Being passionate about something makes you feel good. Being persistent will help you achieve your goals and make you feel good (I still wear Dad's ring today that reminds me that I am going to write 53 books!) Today, these are lessons I pass on to my own children.

However, perhaps the most important 'lesson' Dad gave me for my role as an educator was when he said, 'David, my job as a teacher is to make whatever I am teaching sound like the most interesting and important thing my students could possibly know at that particular time'. And he did that through his obvious passion for his topic and the enthusiasm of his delivery. I taught with Dad for a time, and many of his students would say to me 'Your Dad makes history so interesting!'

So, are you a learning hero? Are you passionate about learning, and are you 'passing the learning bug' onto your students?

Seeders and zoomers

Sometimes, as educators, we can become disheartened when we don't see much (if any) improvement in the progress of our students. We feel that what we are doing is not making

Key pointers

How to encourage your students to become life-long learners by being positive about learning.

Encourage your students to be aware that we need to:

- 4.1 be positive about learning
- 4.2 seek knowledge about self, others and the world around us
- 4.3 recognise the value of knowledge
- 4.4 have an enquiring mind—be curious
- 4.5 determine how we learn best
- 4.6 have an open mind
- 4.7 be a critical thinker
- 4.8 have a global perspective
- 4.9 seek learning opportunities everywhere
- 4.10 keep learning.

a difference (which is what Einstein's teachers must have thought). But obviously, along the way, Einstein's teachers did make a difference—and so will you. Glenn Capelli explains why some students 'get it' straight away and why others take a bit longer with his 'Seeders and zoomers' concept.

'Zoomers' are those students who 'get it' straight away. 'Seeders', on the other hand, take a bit longer. They might get it after 10 minutes, 10 days, 10 months or 10 years! But it was you who 'planted the seed'.

So, thank you Super Teacher for the wonderful job you do. Keep making a difference by encouraging your students to 'be the learning kind'.



Ten simple things you can encourage your students to do to become lifelong learners

Encourage your students to:

1. read every day
2. read nonfiction as well as fiction
3. buy lots of books and start their own book collection at home
4. visit the library
5. ask lots of questions
6. look up answers to questions or solutions to problems on the Internet
7. find learning heroes
8. read newspapers (while keeping a positive mindset)
9. watch documentaries
10. keep a learning journal – 'what I have learned today is ...'

Give your children 'Six kinds of best'

This article is the fourth in a series of six articles based on the 'Six kinds of best' concept. The concept provides a simple framework to help teachers and parents articulate what good values are and gives students signposts to point them in the right direction when they get to 'crossroad' moments in their lives—times when they need to make important decisions. By teaching the 'Six kinds of best' we are giving our children a simple, consistent and meaningful message that helps them remember what they need to do in order to become happy and successful individuals.

The Six kinds of best affirmation



www.sixkindsofbest.com

Seven ways to teach children to 'be the learning kind'

1. Teach children the 'Six Kinds of Best' affirmation so they internalise the core values.
2. Articulate what 'being the learning kind' means. See the key pointers. Put up a poster to remind students.
3. Teach lessons on the key pointers from the *Values education toolkit* books. Free downloads available at <www.sixkindsofbest.com>.
4. Use 'Six kinds of best' language. For example, if someone is demonstrating good learning qualities say, 'Excellent work, Peter, that's being the learning kind'.
5. Catch children being the learning kind. Give them an 'I am the learning kind' sticker or certificate. Better still, get children to praise each other when they see examples of other children being the learning kind.
6. Use an individual or class progress chart to reinforce positive examples of learning.
7. Create a 'Be the learning kind' class display.

For more information on the 'Six kinds of best' *Values education toolkit* resources, visit <www.sixkindsofbest.com>.