

Celebrate the Days of Enlightenment

Imagine being a child with learning difficulties. Every day you struggle with your schoolwork. You never put up your hand and are terrified of being called upon. Then suddenly one day when the planets align and everything in our galaxy is right you have the day of your life. On that particular day, the answers all seem to come to you. You readily put up your hand and fully participate in the class. At the end of day you are very proud of yourself and rightfully so.

Unfortunately things do not carry forward to the following day. Once again the answers are not obvious and you lose all the confidence you gained the day before. However, your teacher remembering your performance in class the previous day, immediately calls upon you to answer a question in class. Once again you are terrified and after a long pause you tell the teacher you do not know the answer. What happens next is critical to your self-esteem. If the teacher simply calls upon another student then you can sit quietly down in your seat. However, if the teacher replies by saying, “What do you mean you don’t know? Yesterday you would have answered this question easily! Obviously you are just not trying once again.” Your self-esteem is totally crushed. What’s even worse is that the teacher may view you in this manner from this day forward.

The fact is that children with special learning needs are extremely inconsistent. One day they can perform somewhat adequately and other days they find themselves lost in class. The worst thing that can possibly happen is that they have that one enlightened day upon which their performance is judged forever more. As educators we need to celebrate that one great day. We must never judge the child’s future performance on it. Expressions such as: “You could do the work when you put your mind to it” or “The day you bothered to pay attention you had no difficulty with this”, are not only hurtful but they are totally destructive.

Our goal as educators is to help and encourage students to have more of those phenomenal days. We never want the student to regret ever having such a day. For if this happens, the student will ensure that it never happens again. Either she will sit quietly even when she knows the answer or simply not come to school when she feel it’s going to be a great day.

That one great day should enlighten us as to the student’s potential. It should encourage us to work even harder with the student to enable him to reach his potential. It should never be considered the norm which haunts the student from that day forward.

Don Reist – www.tutorwiz.com – don@tutorwiz.com