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Education & Career Development Agency

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One-on-One in Own Home

ROBERT KIRWAN

Operating An Independent
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Education, Training & Staff
Development Consultant
Since January 2006

Member of the
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Trustee with the
Rainbow District School Board

Bachelor of Arts
Mathematics & Economics

Master of Arts
Education Administration

Professional Educator
Practicing Since 1974

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“Make the Most Of Your True Talents And Keep Your Dreams Alive ”

REFLECTIONS by...

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We all want to be good at what we do. Whether we are engaged in sporting activities, work related tasks or recreational hobbies, we all have this intense desire to do well.

Unfortunately, we soon come to realize that it is a cruel fact of life that there is no way we can be good at everything. Some people are natural athletes - others couldn't catch a ball if their life depended on it. Some children are gifted students and come home with straight A's every year. Others struggle just to get passing marks.

If you ever get down on yourself, think about the following story:

“Sparky didn't have much going for him. He failed every subject in the 8th grade and in high school he flunked Latin, algebra, english and physics. He made the golf team, but promptly lost the only important match of the season, then lost the consolation match. He was awkward socially - more shy than disliked. He never once asked a girl to go out on a date in high school.



One thing, however, was important to Sparky - drawing! He was proud of his artwork even though no one else appreciated it. He submitted cartoons to

the editors of his high school yearbook, but they were turned down. Even so, Sparky aspired to be an artist. After high school, he sent samples of his artwork to the Walt Disney Studios. Again, he was turned down.

Still, Sparky didn't quit packing his suitcase! He decided to write his own autobiography in cartoons. The character he created became famous worldwide - the subject not only of cartoon strips but countless books, television shows, and licensing opportunities. Sparky, you see, was Charles Shulz, creator of "Peanuts" comic strip. Like his character, Charlie Brown, Shulz may not have been able to do many things, but he made the most of what he could do."

And so, we are reminded almost every day that our job as parents and teachers is to provide children with experiences and opportunities that will develop their natural talents and skills to the fullest. We must help them find what they do best, and once that discovery is made, we must facilitate the development of those particular skills. While it is always admirable to help children strengthen their weaknesses, we should never forget that it is impossible for a child to grow up to become an adult who is "good" at everything.

The good athlete should be encouraged to train and develop his/her athletic skills and to explore careers that will utilize those skills. The person who has a passion for reading should be given every opportunity to read and fuel that passion. The talented artist should be allowed the freedom to be creative and excel in that field.



The biggest challenge facing the education system today stems from the fact that we are constantly facing pressure to have a child achieve "straight A's" in every subject on the report card. A child who achieves A's in Reading and Writing and C's in Mathematics causes great concern for his parents and teachers. He is often given extra help and homework to bring up his math mark and although he may improve his mark in math to B, he may have had to take time away from Reading and Writing, seeing those marks drop down to a B.

Our goal as a teachers and parents should be to encourage the student to excel even more in Reading and Writing, aiming for an A+ in those areas. Research has shown that as one improves his/her areas of strength, the areas of weakness will also grow. By pushing for an A+ in Reading and Writing, there is every likelihood that you will also bring the Math mark up to a B naturally without having to do much extra work. The improved "learning skills" developed in reading and writing will be transferred to other subjects.

So, if you are one of the few who are good at everything you do, thank your lucky stars every morning. If, however, you are like most of us, follow the example of Charles Shulz and make the most of what you can do. Find your passion and add fuel to it for the rest of your life. Everything else will follow.