



# The Learning Clinic

## Education & Career Development Agency

An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It's being able to differentiate between what you know and what you don't.

**Anatole France**

Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.

**Oscar Wilde**

Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.

**William Butler Yeats**

Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.

**B. F. Skinner**

Education... has produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading.

**G. M. Trevelyan**

Much education today is monumentally ineffective. All too often we are giving young people cut flowers when we should be teaching them to grow their own plants.

**John W. Gardner**

Why should society feel responsible only for the education of children, and not for the education of all adults of every age?

**Erich Fromm**

To be able to be caught up into the world of thought - that is being educated.

**Edith Hamilton**



## *The Starfish Thrower*

*REFLECTIONS* by...

Robert Kirwan OCT, B.A. (Math), M.A. (Education)

Education, Training & Career Development Coach

*The Purpose of Life Is To Matter; To Count; To Stand for something; To Have It Make Some Difference That We Lived At All.....Leo Rosten*

I think all teachers will agree that Leo Rosten's quotation above says it all. This is our purpose in life. To make a difference in the lives of others. I have taken on many roles during my own life. A husband, a parent, a teacher, a son, a brother, a friend - no matter what hat I wore, as I look back over my life I like to think that I have made a difference in the lives of the people I have touched.

And now, in my role as a Professional Learning Coach, I am convinced that this is what living life to the fullest is all about.

Life is all about discovery; finding hidden talents and interests; experiencing all there is about life so that you can make wise decisions as you grow and develop into a mature, responsible individual? That should be the purpose of education. It is about learning who you are and being true to yourself so that you can fulfill your dreams and enjoy a career in which you can find satisfaction and happiness, not only in your work but in every aspect of your life.

I want to share with you a little story that will express exactly how I feel about my role as a Professional Learning Coach. I know I am only one person, and it will be hard to change the world, but I think you will soon see why this is one of my favourite stories of all time and why I return to this story often for inspiration.

It is called The Star Thrower, and is written by Loren Eiseley. Her story has been told and retold so many times that I am sure it would be next to

impossible to find the original version, but the story goes something like this:



## ***THE STAR THROWER***

*Once upon a time there was an old man who used to go to the ocean to walk along the beach and enjoy the waves crashing upon the rocks. Early one morning he was walking along the shore by himself. As he looked down the deserted beach, he saw a human figure in the distance. As he got closer to the stranger, he saw that it was a young teenage boy. The boy was reaching down to the sand, picking up something and very gently throwing it into the ocean. As the old man got closer, he yelled out, "Good morning, young fellow. What are you doing?"*

*The teenager paused, looked up and replied, "Throwing starfish back*

*in the ocean."*

*"Why on earth are you doing that?" asked the old man.*

*The boy replied, "Because the sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in they'll die."*

*The old man looked at the teenager in disbelief and said, "But the beach goes on for miles and miles and there are starfish all along it. You can't possibly make a difference."*

*The young boy listened politely, then bent down, picked up another starfish and threw it into the sea, past the breaking waves and said, "It made a difference for that one." And then the very wise young boy continued on his way down the beach, bending down and throwing starfish after starfish back into the ocean.*

Whenever I feel like I am up against tremendous odds and that my efforts are hopeless in the larger scheme of things, I think about *The Starfish Thrower*. I would advise every teacher to make a copy of this story and keep it somewhere handy so that every time you wonder about whether it is worth the effort.

We have all been gifted with the ability to make a difference. It is just like Leo Rosten stated in the title to this article: "The purpose of life is to matter; to count; to stand for something; to have it make some difference that we lived at all".

It is my personal belief that there is something very special in each and every one of us. It is also my belief that it is our responsibility as human beings to reach out to the people who come into our life and make a difference by sharing those special gifts. And the wonderful thing is that we can all accomplish this with very little effort.

You may not be able to change the world, and you may not be able to make a difference to everyone, but you certainly can make a difference to most of the students you meet.



The young boy in the story understood this very important meaning of life. He represents all young persons who have the courage to experience all there is to encounter along their journey of life. They are not afraid to reach out and try new things.

The old man in the story had become skeptical from his experiences with others. He had adopted the philosophy that if he cannot change the world, there is no use in even trying. He would sit back and do nothing to save the starfish.

What he learned from the young boy on the beach is that even if the odds are against you and it seems as if there is little you can do, what little you can get done will definitely make some difference. It doesn't matter how long your journey may be, you can still only get there one step at a time.

Don't miss out on a golden opportunity to make it a real difference that you have lived at all. Live your life to the fullest and be the best you can be.

**Robert Kirwan, OCT, B.A. (Math), M.A. (Education)**

**Education, Training & Career Development**

4456 Noel Crescent, Val Therese, Ontario P3P 1S8

Phone: (705) 969-7215 Cell: (705) 562-7793

[www.thelearningclinic.ca](http://www.thelearningclinic.ca)

[rkirwan@thelearningclinic.ca](mailto:rkirwan@thelearningclinic.ca)

PERSONAL TUTORING

Over 100 Instructors

English & French

Elementary to Post-Secondary

One-on-One in Own Home