I have been a student of life for as long as I can remember. When I discovered the possibility of earning a living "playing games" with children, I couldn't pass up the opportunity! Of course, earning a Bachelor of Science degree and Teacher certification took quite a few years and many long hours of work, but I enjoyed it because I was among other energetic students and we were all totally involved in what we loved! It was more like play than work.

Since I began teaching, I have come across a few students each year that struggle in just about every aspect of their schooling, but when it comes to Physical Education, they absolutely shine. Of course, this is true in other subject areas as well. I think that it is our job as teachers to find that one thing that each student can do better than others and make sure they know how wonderful they are because of that special talent. By doing this, we can inspire the desire to learn. We need to be creative and come up with projects that bring out that spark in our students, that playfulness. If students look forward to coming to school, that is when education can become a lifelong adventure. Too often I have seen our system of GRADING interfere with this adventure. I would like to change the way students are graded in our traditional schools.

I have always gotten good grades and done well on standardized tests as well as other written assignments and tests. I consider myself lucky in this aspect since I know of many people who are actually quite intelligent but seem to have trouble with tests, thus, not earning the grades needed to label them "bright". I realize that we live in a time when test scores seem to be more and more important to show how much our students have learned and to try to save our own jobs by proving that our students are learning. Some teachers are tending to teach "to the test" just for this purpose. We know if our methods are effective! We know what it feels like to finally get through to that kid that has been struggling for so long! Sometimes it takes almost as many different methods of teaching as we have students in the classroom to get through to that inner desire to learn that each student has. It's a shame when we have to back up and "test" again just because it is "report card time" and must have some test scores to back up the grades.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could develop a non-graded progress reporting system? I am definitely in favor of project-based education where student portfolios, rather than just grades, can demonstrate understanding of state mandated curriculum standards. New Technology High School has been given the opportunity, through financial backing from business partnerships, to demonstrate the possibilities of such a program. They are DOING DIFFERENT THINGS to try to bring out the best in their students. That's what teaching is all about. That's what I believe the schools of the future could and should be like.
It seems to me such a huge undertaking, trying to make changes of this magnitude. I wonder how people find the time and energy to even attempt such a project. Then I realize that I just need to look at the situation differently; make it more fun; make it a game; play!

Taking this Problem Solving class has awakened my desire to look into these and other possible changes in education. Reading Roger's book and David's articles have made me think about ways to be more creative and something I almost forgot even existed, DREAMING!