Teachers see what love does not

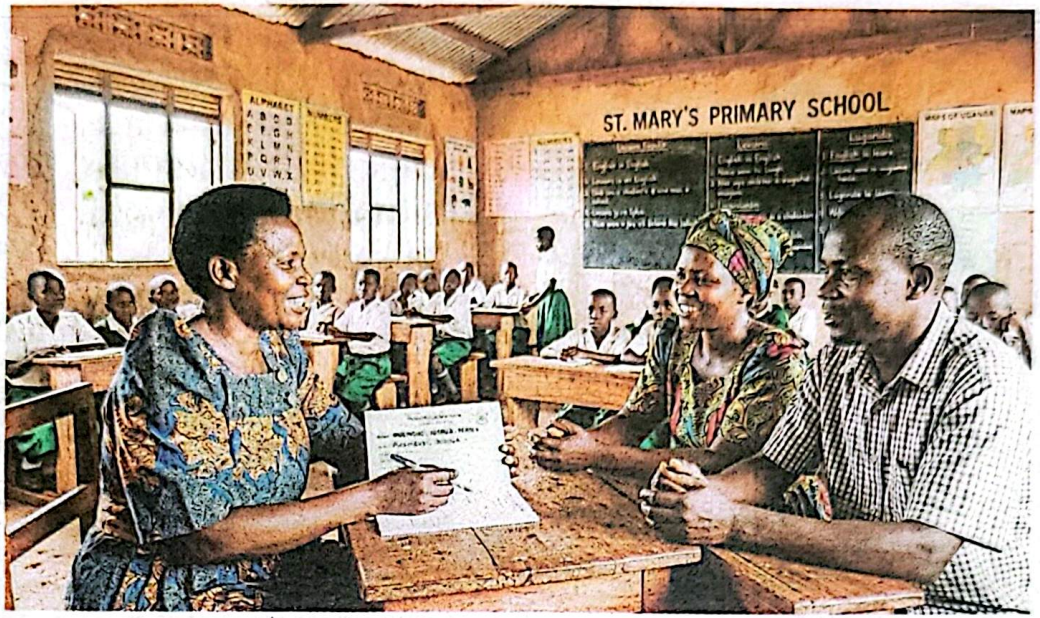
The thing about parenting is that every parent thinks they know their child more than anyone. The fact is you know a version of your child they allow to show you. You probably think they are actually good at math. You look at that 50 percent on the report card and you think, "With a little coaching, my child could be a surgeon." You see the way they argue about bedtime and you think, "Chief Justice or at least a legislator. Definitely."

Before you get your heart broken, please stop.

I say this with love, because I, too, have been a fool. Love makes fools of all of us. That is its job. Love looks at a child who dismantles a radio into 17 pieces and cannot put it back together and says, "Engineer."

Love looks at a child who draws on every available surface, walls, homework, the cat, and says, "Picasso." Sometimes love is right. Sometimes love is so spectacularly wrong that years later, you are standing in a taxi park wondering where the school fees went.

This is where teachers come in. Teachers are not blinded by love. Teachers do not care, even a little bit, about your dreams for your child. They care about something far more useful; reality. They see your child every day, alongside 20 or 30 other children, which means they have something you will never have; context. They know that yes, your daughter writes beautiful stories, but she also cannot add fractions to save her life. They know that your son is a wizard at science experiments but cannot sit still long enough to read a picture book.



Do you want to hear this? No. You want to hear that your child is exceptional in every possible way. You want to hear that the fractions thing is a fluke, a temporary glitch, a conspiracy by the school system to keep your genius down.

But here is the truth, and it hurts: Teachers spend more waking hours with your child than you do. I know. It stings. But it is true. From January to December, Monday through Friday, your child belongs to them. They see the unvarnished version, the version that does not perform love for you, the version that forgets homework, the version that cheats at card games during indoor recess.

Every year, without fail, teachers sit down across from anxious parents and have the conversations no one wants to have. They say things like, "Your child is struggling with fractions," or "She has a genuine gift for art, but sciences may not be her thing." And the parents nod politely, smile through clenched teeth, and go home to sign up for more math tutoring anyway. Because love. Because dreams. Because my child will be different.

But here is what happens when you ignore that information. You pay for math tutoring. You threaten. You cajole. You cry. Your child cries. Everyone is miserable. And at the end of this long, expensive, emotionally exhausting journey, your child still cannot do math, and now they also hate you a little bit.

Alternatively, you could listen. You could say, "Tell me more about this art thing." You could enrol them in an extra art class instead of the third round of math coaching. You could watch them light up instead of shut down.

I am not saying abandon ambition. Ambition is fine. Ambition is what gets children out of bed on days when they would rather not. But ambition without information is just wishful thinking, and wishful thinking is not a parenting strategy. There is a trending song where a father who paid full school fees for a doctor is wondering how he ended up with a taxi conductor instead.

I guarantee you someone told him. Some teacher, somewhere, probably in O-Level, probably during one of those difficult conversations, said something gentle like, "He is wonderful with people, very persuasive, but the sciences are a struggle."

And he nodded politely and went home and signed his son up for more science tutoring anyway. Because love. Because dreams. Because my child will be different.

But children are not different. Children are children. They have strengths and weaknesses just like the rest of us. And the kindest thing you can do, the wisest thing, is to see them clearly. Not as the doctor you wanted. Not as the lawyer you never became. Just as them. The child who argues about fares like a parliamentarian. The child who can talk anyone into anything. The child who might just build a taxi empire someday.

Listen to the teachers. They are the only people who love your child enough to tell you the truth. And the truth, however inconvenient, is the only thing that will save you both from standing in a taxi park one day, wondering where it all went wrong.

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