

Note from

The Editor

We've been mining for gold. Not the kind that you wear in a medallion around the neck. The kind that comes from lessons, to wear in the heart. This issue of OneBranch explores the importance of understanding not only the importance of history and literature, but the underlying messages carried within and how they inform our children and our world.

My mom and co-presenter and I recently gave the keynote at the convocation ceremonies for the Dripping Springs Independent School District in Dripping Springs, Texas. We explored the historical roots of present day educational practices and theories in the United States. Some of the research for that keynote you will find in the article Why do teachers need to know history? After the keynote, superintendent of the school district, Mary Ward closed the ceremony with a poem "The Calf Path" by Sam Walter Foss, see the excerpt in this issue.

As I pondered further "the marriage of history and literature," and reflected on the different voices from history, common themes relevant to us as parents and teachers began to emerge. I considered that many of these voices warned of the calf path, and wrote plays, stories and diaries not only for themselves and their day, but also to shepherd us off the calf path and back to the plumb line - where love, patience and relationship are golden. These are the treasures I'd like to pass on to my children.

Just as the path of a wandering lone calf become the thoroughfare of a metropolis because animals and people followed it because it was an easy path, already there - do we as parents and teachers assume that those who led or followed others down different paths in education, past and present, must surely have understand the most effective ways of teaching and learning?

Children need meaning and relevancy in their lives. We hope that parents will spend time developing relationships with their children and their children's literacy, taking time to read aloud, write notes, do research. Encourage children to find their own connections and involve family members. Learn from the voices of previous generations and heed the advice to wake up and shepherd the young minds in our care. And that through our love and continual learning we might find our way back to the plumb line.

Dawn Wink, guest editor

Join us in this special issue for the school 2004-2005 school year, where we share our research that started when we took the advice twelve year old Maggie, who lives in the Texas hill country. Through this process, we followed the books that led to other books and uncovered three golden keys to learning:

The Marriage of History and Literature.

The marriage of history and literature took place long ago. Is each going its own way in your classroom? A peek into history gives clues about why Shakespeare might have written what and how he did and how important it is for us to incorporate the historical aspect into our language arts studies.

Building a Classroom Library.

Build library using etexts of classic literature, youth historical fiction and historical reference books and source documents are gold for the classroom.

Reading aloud and combining Theatre Arts with History and Literature.

Teacher/author Nancie Atwell reminds us that "people of all ages like to be read to." choosing short dialogues from plays is a good place to start.

