What is a 3rd grader, anyway?

By Josh Thompson

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Look at you – a marvelous, wonderful, human learning!

You worked through crawling, walking,

 running, climbing,

 jumping, leaping,

 flying? Still working on that?

You learned sucking and swallowing

 eating and chewing,

 mixing and matching

Now, on to cooking and baking!

Remember oohing and cooing?

 babbling and singing?

hearing sounds and seeing new words

worlds of words

 words sounded

 words printed

 stories and tales from far away

brought to life in your imagination.

Words in translation

 versions of the same.

This sequence, these steps are

 real, important, necessary

Most people can’t ride a bike

 until they’ve mastered

 the balance needed

 to walk a balance beam.

Most people practice sums

 long before they attempt

 multiplication.

Many people learn to read

 before they write –

though others use scribbles

 and letter-like forms

 to construct a written expression

 before they learn to read.

All this, and more

 Some of these, and others untold

you’ve grasped, learnt, acquired

 without a teacher

or maybe with.

Teachers do help

They equip, prepare, present

They help us to practice,

 to know, to find out

 all we didn’t know

 and how to look it up.

Teachers care

 Sometimes they catch us as we

 fail and fall.

 others cajole and coax

 prodding us along

 to try and try again.

 good ones cackle with glee

 at every attempt

 we make to attain a new skill

 try another way, or take a first step

 in a new direction.

All this teaching and learning

 is quite different from

 schools and rules.

schools love order

 and procedures.

“Do this! Stop that!”

“First you know your ABCs

Then I will test your colors

And numbers.”

“All this wonder

 all this “Watch me!”

 now must wait,

 while I deliver my lesson

 on how to count peas.”

“And to make it easy on me

 I’m going to slice you all

 Into Grades,

 based on age,

 and only tell you what

 I think you need

 to know now.

 whether you’ve finished yesterday’s

 lesson or not

 whether you want to prepare for

the tomorrow of my design, or another.”

“So grades go

 First and then Second

 Fifth after Fourth.

 Siblings and co-learners out,

 just all the same in

this class

 a group of same-aged subjects

 subjected to my schedule,

 my time,

 my lessons – “

Remember when you used

 to learn without being taught?

Find those who champion

 the learner you are.

Challenge those who

 tell you to do it this way

 because I said so.

Ask me someday about that time

 I stood up to them,

 and another time when I didn’t.

Look at you – a marvelous, wonderful, human learning!