

education *update*

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Listening to the Whole Child

When Stephen Sroka talks about what students want from today's schools, he doesn't just read from notes on a three-by-five card. Instead, he brings the student voices to you. During the closing general session of ASCD's 2005 Conference on Teaching and Learning in San Francisco, Calif., Sroka's panel of student experts (pictured below from left to right: Sroka, Neha, Maggie, Carlos, and Jake) answered questions about the kinds of schools they want to go to and identified their amalgam of the most desirable teacher qualities. Here's what they had to say.

What makes a school a safe and healthy place?

- Supportive teachers that students can connect with. Teachers who know who you are and can relate to your needs.
- Being free to speak your mind and being respected.
- Knowing you're just there to learn and there are no outside or internal threats.

What are the qualities of effective teachers? What kinds of teachers make the classroom come alive?

- They are nonjudgemental. They let kids know their opinions are welcomed and respected.
- They are outgoing, understanding, and unthreatening, and you can confide in them.
- They care. They have a passion for the content and the students they teach. They don't just say, "It's in the book."

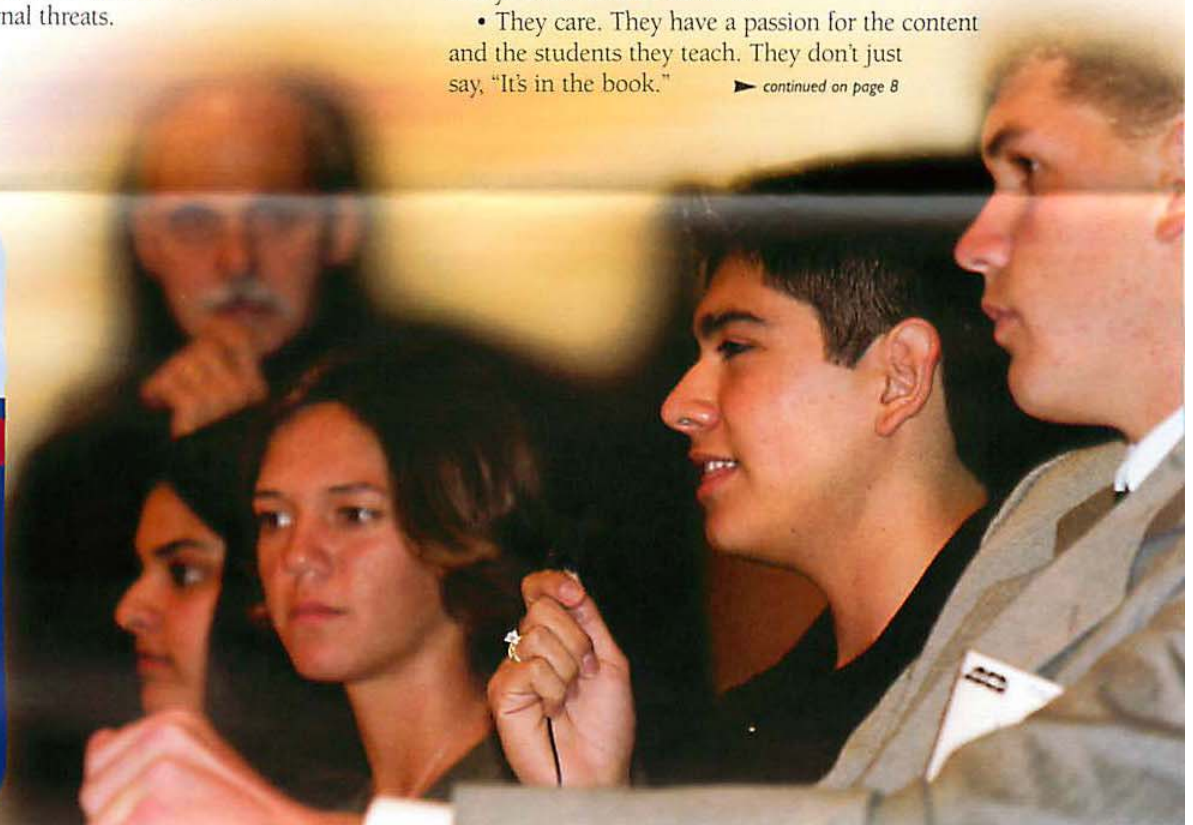
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► Conference Report

This issue provides a glimpse into presentations and activities at ASCD's 2005 Conference on Teaching and Learning, held October 23-25 in San Francisco, Calif. This year's theme was "Student Achievement: The Broader Picture." Session reports written by Laura Varlas. Conference photos by Mark Regan.



Share Your Thoughts

Please share your feedback on the articles in this issue of *Education Update* by sending an e-mail message to update@ascd.org. We'd also like to hear your ideas for future topics for this newsletter, because we want *Education Update* to meet your professional needs.

Student Voices

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What problems would you remove from your school?

- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Dispassionate teachers and students
- Testing as a way of ranking students
- Grades
- Drugs

What top qualities would you want in your school?

- Positive discipline
- A clean, safe, and welcoming environment
- Teaching for understanding
- Emotionally nurturing, quality teachers (with a senses of humor)
- Creativity that is valued and encouraged.

The conversation with Sroka's student experts embodied a spirit of teaching and learning that addresses the whole child. Putting kids at the center of instructional policy and practices begins by listening to the needs of today's K-12 scholars.

To hear portions of Sroka's closing general session, go to www.ascd.org/newsletters and follow the links to the January 2006 issue of *Education Update*. Visit our conference blog (<http://teachingandlearningconference.blogspot.com/2005/10/asking-for-it.html>) to read more about listening to student voices and to access resources for meeting the needs of the whole child. **||**