

In Response

I Read *Writing Works* last week and thoroughly enjoyed Barbara's piece on the student hug. Wonderful!

And then yesterday I thought of it again.

I had been out walking with my daughter and after we parted, and I continued to my apt., I looked across the street (and keep in mind that Portland is a quirky city) and saw a quite large looking fellow (may late 20s- early 30s) wearing what could have passed for a chef's jacket--perfectly white & ironed. He was holding a sign that read "Free Hugs."

He saw me looking, smiled, and I waved. A young woman was walking toward me, smiling, and said, "I just asked for one. He's really a good hugger."

So, I crossed the street, walked back to him, and said, "Hi, I don't care if you're doing research; I'd like a hug." He laughed and said, "I'm not doing research; I just do this once in a while because a hug makes people smile." So I got my big-guy hug and I was smiling all the way home.

I bet your young student will never feel embarrassed about your accepting his hug.

—Joan Donner '87

I have been catching up on some reading in between holiday activities. The Fall 2007 issue of *Writing Works* is outstanding. Packed in just a few pages, all of the articles were terrific to read! Best wishes for a happy holiday season and for a wonderful new year.

—Dottie Hardin '86

I really enjoyed Barbara's article about hugging her student. The newsletter came to my mailbox when I really needed a hug and a little TLC. I had a tough day at school with a lot of negative people and the article was like a friend giving me a hug and regenerating kindness into my psyche.

Thank you.

—Zan Dolan '02

I suspended a student for ten days today. I spent the morning talking with her about the transgression that brought her to my office. I sat with her while she answered questions from our school resource officer. I called her grandparents and explained all that had happened. I asked them to come pick her up. As we waited for her grandfather, I reassured her that she will get

through this. That she will pick up her life and move forward. I told her she was lucky she got caught because she had time to decide to make better choices. As she left she hesitated and I put my arms around her and hugged her. She relaxed and I told her I would be thinking of her.

One of my secretaries looked at me askance. I shrugged and said we all have different styles. I said mine is to treat students the way I would want my own children treated. She said not everyone would agree with what I had just done. I said I guess I wouldn't know whose approach is right. I could only do what I do. But I second guessed myself all afternoon. Maybe I am too nice.

The Fall issue of *Writing Works* was in my mailbox when I got home from school today. I settled into my chair and read a couple of the articles. The Director's Report was such a gift. It expressed my thinking precisely. I am so glad I hugged that young girl today. I hope she knows that I can see beyond the current situation. I hope she recognized that I care about her and what happens to her.

Thank you for affirming my belief that compassion and caring go far in changing behavior.

—Madeleine Synnott '94

