



Who Says It's Wrong?: Closing the Morality Gap in Public Education

Suzanne Nicastrò

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In *Who Says It's Wrong?: Closing the Morality Gap in Public Education*, former middle and high school principal Suzanne Nicastro describes the historic decline of character education in public schools, along with its sobering results. With the state of public schools a national concern, Nicastro, a 20-year veteran of public education, presents a provocative blueprint for addressing the problem. By painting an undeniable relationship between moral standards and academic learning, this book successfully argues that moral standards are necessary partners in the field of public education. By adopting (and assessing) four national standards in every American classroom-honesty, compassion, loyalty, and fortitude-educators will be fully armed to address the most important aspects of child development. Only then, will the elusive "achievement gap" be wiped out and public education saved. The data is clear: illegal behavior is on the rise. Violence in public schools (including bullying) persists. As students move up four points on achievement scales in reading, they are still cheating on tests, bullying each other, and breaking laws. With increasing numbers, average-to-high achievers are exhibiting disturbing anti-social behaviors. We can no longer assume good grades equate to good people. Nicastro tackles arguments that adopting a national set of values will result in putting students in a moral straightjacket. Armed with current educational research and real-life classroom stories, universal moral standards are shown to not only influence learning patterns, but also enhance school culture and support democratic ideals...for all children...no matter what their backgrounds. A Call to Action While *Who Says It's Wrong?: Closing the Morality Gap in Public Education* will prove thought provoking, it also needs to be a call to action: how will Americans redefine the future of public education? Should the discussion focus solely on academic standards or will it include those democratic ideals that involve morality and character building? If the foundation of a democracy is built on ethical decision making, what role does public education play in ensuring that her youngest citizens internalize such values? The time has come to begin a national dialogue around the issue of morality and kids. This book pushes the door open for that discussion by beginning an honest conversation about where our kids fit in the morality index. By attempting to define how values affect learning, and providing solutions for character overhaul in schools with direct, explicit instruction, K-12 schools will be able to turn the corner and find success. This isn't an academic book for educators that discusses a new philosophy or theory. Morality "standards" are neither a new nor original concept. Yet, if history tells us this is so, why have schools veered so dramatically away from morality practice? By exploring current and historical data and real-life stories about teaching and learning, this book illustrates the way in which morality standards are shown to influence the entire learning process. *Who Says It's Wrong?: Closing the Morality Gap in Public Education* is fighting for the return of character education as the driving force in classrooms-not at the expense of academic standards, but as an equal partner.

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