



#117 *The School for Squirrels*



It was Fall and the school for squirrels was in full swing. The students were full of energy and the teachers were happy to see students return from Summer holiday. “This year,” began the headmaster of the school, as she addressed a whole school assembly, “we are expecting a wonderful harvest from the black walnut grove. Last year, we saw a profusion of flowers and this Spring had no late frosts, so we should all be ready for a massive amount of work. We will have many walnuts to find and a lot of effort getting those husks off. Always remember to get to the heart of the nut and do a good job burying it safely for our future. As our school motto says, ‘Get to the Heart of the Matter!’” She then explained that this year was different in another way. The walnut fruitage was so enormous, school would have to be run with an entirely new approach. Classes would be limited to only one hour a day, in order for students to

help with the harvest! This meant that only the two most important subjects would be taught - Communication and Counting. The students would be apprenticed to community members and do the rest of their learning while performing the communal tasks surrounding the great harvest. Students were ecstatic! For, they knew that they would spend their time alongside family and friends, with meaningful responsibilities. They also knew that they would not be bored every day with, what the students called 'shells and husks' - classes that students would like to shuck and drop. And, it also meant that they would not have those never-ending tests.

Well, the record-breaking year of the walnuts was a great success! The squirrels gathered walnut hearts with great energy such that the whole community had enough to store away. And the school ... the school had a learning experience, itself. They saw that the students and families did so well without all of the former school subjects being taught that they decided to act on the two lessons they had learned: 1) to have much, much less formal schooling, and 2) to let the young apprentices learn from the community much, much more.

GET TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER