

More Good Teachers Needed

Rules Without Relationships Part 4

By Barrington H. Brennen

What in the world does having more good teachers have to do with reducing violence in our nation? Read on and see. In this series on Rules Without Relationships, I am endeavoring to show that any rule enforced by parents, teachers, police, or employers, without first establishing relationships with those who are to obey those rules, breed chaos and rebellion. In the last article, I mentioned how teachers are an important link in the chain of development of our youth. In this article, I am presenting some characteristics of good teachers. These are the characteristics that make a big difference in the lives of troubled youth today, and they constitute a pro-active approach to violence prevention.

TEACHERS ALWAYS TELL THE TRUTH

Do you realize that when most children reach five or six and start going to school, they usually trust the teacher's words more than their parent's words? Teachers are perhaps the most trusted and believed persons in the world, especially for primary school children. It is very difficult for a parent to contradict what a teacher has said in the classroom. The little voices cry out every time, "my teacher said that." If the teacher said it, then that's law, and no one else can change it. It is very challenging for parents to be effective when teachers, who spend more time with children, are negative toward them. This is why wise-thinking parents select a school depending on the quality of its teachers and teaching environment. Teachers and what they teach must compliment what children learn at home and not contradict it. I am certain that contradiction is one of the contributing factors toward violence in our country today.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD TEACHERS

It takes a special person to be a teacher. Teaching is like no other profession. Dr. Bob Kizlik, a specialist in teaching development states: "As a teacher, you will wear many hats. You will be a communicator, a disciplinarian, a conveyor of information, an evaluator, a classroom manager, a counselor, a member of many teams and groups, a decision-maker, a role-model, and a surrogate parent, to name but of a few of the roles teachers assume in carrying out their duties. Each of these roles requires practice and skills that are often not taught in teacher preparation programs." This last sentence perhaps speaks to the idea that good teachers are not trained, they are born. Formal training is only an enrichment to the already natural qualities of a good teacher. Do you realize that only parents have more roles to play in life, and that one cannot truly train to be a good parent? By that I mean that one should not become a teacher unless special natural qualities are present, even so a person should not become a parent unless he or she also has these natural qualities. What are these characteristics? Dr. Bob Kizlik states that:

Good teachers are good at explaining things. Ask yourself the question if you really like explaining how things work, or how something happened? Too many teachers get annoyed when they must take time to explain things.

Good teachers have a sense of humor. This is really a greatly needed tool in the classroom. Dr. Kizlik indicates that research has consistently shown that good teachers have a sense of humor, and they are able to use humor as part of their teaching methods. He states that humor, used properly, can be a powerful addition to any lesson.

Good teachers like people, especially students in the age range in which they intend to teach. Most teachers choose an area of specialization such as elementary education, special education, secondary education, or higher education because they have a temperament for students in those age ranges. If you are not comfortable working with young children, don't major in elementary education!

Good teachers are inherently fair-minded. They are able to assess students on the basis of performance, not on the students' personal qualities.

Good teachers have "common sense." It may sound a bit corny, but good teachers are practical. They can size up a situation quickly and make an appropriate decision. Whether managing a classroom, leading students on a field trip, seamlessly shifting from one instructional procedure to another, assigning detentions, supervising an intern, or dealing with policy and curriculum issues in the school. There is no substitute for common sense.

Good teachers have a command of the content they teach. It is so unfortunate when someone who claims to be a teacher refuses to be current on information shared and refuses to make the information apart of his or her life?

Good teachers set high expectations for their students and hold them to those expectations. If you are thinking about becoming a teacher, you should set high expectations for yourself, and demand excellence not only of yourself, but of your students also.

Good teachers are detail oriented. If you are a disorganized person in your private life, you will find that teaching will probably be uncomfortable for you. At the very least, teachers must be organized in their professional and teaching duties. If you're not organized and are not detail oriented, teaching may not be the best choice of a profession for you.

Good teachers are good managers of time. Time is one of the most precious resources a teacher has. Good teachers have learned to use this resource wisely.

Good teachers can lead or follow, as the situation demands. Sometimes, teachers must be members of committees, groups, councils, and task forces. Having the temperament to function in these capacities is extremely important. At other times, teachers assume leadership roles. Be sure you are comfortable being a leader or a follower, because sooner or later, you will be called on to function in those roles. These are just some of the key outstanding characteristics of a good teacher. If you do not have these qualities, then please do not become a teacher or a parent. You might just mess up children's mind. If you are a current teacher, and with deep introspection admit that you do not have these characteristics, then it might be best that you remove yourself from the profession and choose another that best suits your personality.

THE TEACHER

In conclusion, teachers are emotionally secure, confident, patient and controlled, flexible and open-minded, unselfish, altruistic, energetic, enthusiastic, free from excessive fears and anxieties, accepting and trusting, and possess a positive self-concept. Teachers maintain satisfying social relationships outside of school time, like teenagers, and treat them with respect. They study the psychology of the youthful mind, expect a lot from their students, and encourage students to do well always.

We do need more good teachers. The old adage says: The hands that rock the cradle rule the world." It is also true to say that "the person who teaches well molds character and minds for eternity." Good teachers prevent violence.

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