

EDUCATION

Teachers

When was the last time we thanked them?

Teachers have different thresholds for tolerance. Some are more patient and understanding while others are quick to scold and chastise. Students push the limits of these thresholds on a fairly regular basis. They learn certain behaviors are more acceptable than others and carry varying degrees of consequences.

Teachers are disciplinarians, executing methods that curb any inappropriate and unnecessary disturbances. "Good" teachers exercise professional disciplinary approaches, enforcing what is tolerable and what is offensive. On the other hand, "bad" teachers use tactless language and actions that are detrimental to the self-esteem and confidence of students.

Stories about "bad" teachers who embarrass students by sharing confidential information with other students unfortunately exist. It is disturbing and unnerving to know that people like this teach in our schools. They should be ashamed of themselves for dealing with students in such a degrading manner. How does a teacher benefit from mocking a student? They don't.

There is a distinguishable separation between teachers who joke around and those who push the boundaries. The same goes for students. There are limits that determine allowable humor in the classroom, requiring adherence from both students and teachers. The crossing of these lines is not to be taken lightly. Maintaining the wall of professionalism is the teacher's responsibility.

Fairness is one of the most significant qualities of likable educators. Ask any student of any age what characteristic deter-

By Vicki Isacowitz



ON THE CHALKBOARD

mines whether a teacher is good or bad. Popular answers are fairness in discipline, demonstration of their passion for teaching, ability to be accommodating when necessary, and objectiveness in their grading. Approachable teachers make asking for extra help or further clarification during class easier. Knowing that it is safe to be unsure opens opportunities for students to face challenges with confidence.

A good teacher is strict, setting guidelines, rules and standards of acceptable conduct. Simultaneously, they nurture and understand the realities of being human that can sometimes interfere with school. These educators receive respect from students, parents, and fellow teachers alike. They are not perfect, but pretty effective when it comes to motivating students to learn.

Name every teacher who taught you throughout your educational career. Try to remember their hairstyles or common facial expressions. Can you recreate the sound of their voice from your memory? Think of factors that contributed to your decision to

treat teachers with respect, deeming them your favorite, or making their life a constant challenge with your presence in class.

Many teachers made everlasting impacts on my life, despite my dislike of school until I got to college. I was a tough judge on whether a teacher was worthy of my approval. Since I didn't care too much for school, if a teacher was able to motivate me to succeed I considered them good. If I liked a teacher, I did well in that class. If I found the teacher to be unfitting, my grades were an appropriate reflection. Overall, I was a decent student. The fact of the matter is that my teachers, at least those I liked, were a major contributing factor toward my motivation to learn.

Teachers wear many hats. They do more than create lesson plans and grade papers. Attending to individual needs of each and every student requires work, patience and time. Teachers encourage working toward and beyond student potentials. They recognize and reward success at all levels. Teachers advise, counsel, educate, and promote being a positive contributing member of a community.

Take the time to write a favorite former teacher, even if you don't send it. Let them know why you still remember them. Say, "Thank you for making a difference."

— Vicki Isacowitz is a Secondary English teacher who has been educating students since 1996. She is co-founder of *Clever Minds Educational Services*, providing tutoring for students in grades K-12. For more information, or to comment on her column, please call (530) 584-1791 or e-mail: vicki@cleverminds.org.