

The Brass Tacks About Teaching

Like any job, teaching children is often idealized and romanticized by young people preparing for a career in education. Then once the reality of what life is like as a teacher hits, it can come as a rude shock. This does not mean that the ideals and values of teaching the next generation of youth and the great thrill of seeing a young mind come alive with knowledge are not wonderful and worthy of respect and praise. In truth, anyone who makes it in the field of teaching must have that idealism that is a deep part of your motivation system because it will be those values that will help you get past the hard times that teaching, particularly in a public school situation often brings with a job of teacher.

But along with the values and ideals, we need to mix that inner drive with a strong dose of reality so that when you show up for your first day and work through your first year of teaching, you are not broadsided by some of the challenges and frustrations that lie ahead. A few moments talking about the brass tacks of a teaching career can help you prepare for the negatives so they are less potent and less able to stop you from being a success in your teaching career.

Probably one of the areas of teaching that often causes high teacher stress and burn out is the level of government regulation and the extent that the administration of a school gets in the way of the teaching process. Many times in public school it almost seems like education is of a lesser value than paying attention to rules and regulations and maintaining order and discipline in the school.

When you come to that teaching position with priority placed on teaching students the subject matter at hand and see them begin to excel academically and you find academics taking a back seat to the schools administrative issues, to discipline issues and to what seems to be a nonstop flood of forms and requirements for every governmental program imaginable, that can cause frustration about the job you have taken in that school.

Under funding of education probably ranks second greatest frustration with the working world of teaching. This lack of funding is evident in your pay and in how well the classes you need to teach are funded. You may not have the supplies you need and many teachers actually find themselves buying supplies from their own money just to make sure their teaching is successful. That is the contrast between the public's lack of substantial support for education and your deep commitment to it. But the funding issue can also result in overcrowding of classrooms because the school cannot afford more classrooms or

sufficient number of teachers to handle a high student population.

The third problem that often broadsides new teachers is that many students are not the angels we wish they would be. Especially in a public school setting, you will have in every class some students who don't care about academics and would rather disrupt the class than allow you to teach those who do want to learn. It takes some real experience and some coaching from experienced teachers in how to handle this kind of student but at least be aware that they will be in your classroom day one and all year long.

It takes some innovative thinking and almost stubborn insistence on staying positive to be a successful teacher under circumstances like this. But if you keep your focus on the kids and on those moments that do come in each school year when you really connect with students and you see them get excited about what you are sharing, that one moment makes dealing with all of the other frustrations entirely worth it.

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