

## Decorum in Teaching

One reason that many if not most teachers go into teaching in the first place is that you have a love of children or of youth and you not only love teaching them but you love hanging around with them. Teachers are very often driven by an inner passion for their students and for the subject matter that is their primary reason for showing up to teach the children of others in the first place. It takes that kind of passion to overcome the many obstacles, difficulties and roadblocks that are thrown in the way of the teaching process not to mention the low pay.

As a result teachers as a rule tend to be people driven more by passion and values than by money or even career advancement. Teaching is a profession where you will see a teacher work for decades just teaching algebra to 7th graders and never moving on. He or she is not stuck at that job level. That is just the nature of the teaching profession because teachers at heart are driven to teach.

But it is important to know about decorum in teaching as well. You enjoy your students and that warm relationship between teacher and student creates the chemistry that makes class time work so well. But there are limits to how much you can show your affection and areas you need to be aware of to avoid any appearance of impropriety between teacher and student. Some rules of behavior that must become as much a part of how you tick as your lesson plans and grading system are...

- . Limit your expressions of friendliness to smiles and supportive statements about the student academically. Never compliment how a student looks or imply that you like or love a student even though the act of teaching does generate warm relationships and emotions about your kids.

- . If at all possible, never touch a student. This is a difficult rule to follow because the very act of being in the same classroom with 20-30 students for hours at a time makes physical contact hard to avoid. But limit intentional contact especially if it is to show affection. It can be misinterpreted way too easily.

- . Watch your eyes, especially male teachers and especially in the junior high and high school grade levels. Students are very aware of the physical picture they present to the world. It is especially difficult to mind this rule when the girls in your class dress in a way that draws the eye even if you mean nothing by it. You have to develop almost a physical discipline to focus your eyes on the faces of the students you teach because even if you are thinking of something else entirely and your eyes rest somewhere that might be misunderstood, that can lead to trouble.

- . Never be alone with a student of either gender. This is even more for

your protection than it is for the protection of the student.

Many of these kind of decorum rules are to avoid the possibility of being falsely accused of some form of inappropriate behavior. Sadly because there has been widely publicized inappropriate behavior between students and teachers, good teachers everywhere have had to learn to live in this austere way because overzealous parents, fellow teachers, volunteers or even students can see something and decide to make an issue of it. And once something like that gets started, it is very difficult to stop.

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