

Teachers: Making a Difference Isn't Always Easy

Teachers are busy. They plan the curriculum. They prepare the lessons. They teach the class. They correct papers. They organize and decorate the classroom. They monitor lunch and recess. They even find time to meet with parents during conferences. It's no wonder most teachers can scarf down a stale donut from the teacher's lounge in less time than it takes to sharpen a pencil. With that being said though, there are other, equally important responsibilities that must be dealt with. Teachers must ultimately learn to manage the classroom and deal with the discipline issues of the difficult child that every classroom is apparently required to have.

Classroom management is an ever-increasing struggle for many teachers. Not only do they have iPods and cell phones to compete with, but they often work closely with children that have been diagnosed with attention disorders, learning disorders, behavior problems, and even those with developmental or medical issues. Their job descriptions won't typically acknowledge it, but teachers must also take on the role of referee, psychologist, nurse, social worker, and even parent for some of these children. To make matters worse, many of the children that these teachers work with have parents who choose to be uninvolved or who are ill-equipped to deal with the problems presented by their child. This becomes time-consuming, frustrating, and draining on the overworked teachers who are ultimately faced with these burdens.

If you are one of these overworked teachers struggling to tame a difficult student, keep the following tips in mind:

- Avoid taking the student's misbehavior personally.
- Look for triggers to the student's misbehavior.
- Talk to the child alone. Find out why he or she is acting out.
- Work WITH the child, not AGAINST the child.
- Avoid "walking on egg shells" around this child.
- Get support from others. Ask for suggestions or advice.
- Avoid labeling the child as a "bad" kid.
- Develop a solid plan for dealing with this child when he or she acts out.
- Take care of yourself. Find someone who will let you "vent."
- Take pride in your efforts and accomplishments with this child.

These tips certainly won't fix the problems you are facing, but might offer a ray of hope in an otherwise unpleasant situation. Good luck, and in case you don't hear it from anyone else -- Thanks for your efforts, you really do make a difference!