

Proposed Standards for Teacher Conduct and Performance

A work in progress – Your input is appreciated

Introduction

Of all the factors influencing student success in school, teacher skills and influence are the most important. The teacher acts as a surrogate parent, directing students through the learning process, creating an atmosphere in which students are either assisted or distracted from learning, and serving as a role model for student attitudes. Teaching is molding minds.

A teacher's influence lasts much longer than a student's time in school. Memories, attitudes, and skills carried from the school experience can last for a lifetime and influence eternal choices. An outstanding teacher will enhance a student's chances at excelling in life, a mediocre teacher will be forgotten, and a poor teacher will inhibit growth or actually add negative baggage that a student must overcome.

Ironically, teachers are often looked up to as being special people and yet subjected to more criticism and scrutiny than most other occupations. This paper is an attempt to quantify and define the characteristics and conduct of a successful teacher. It is intended to serve as a guideline, not a complete definition.

Teacher effectiveness depends on multiple factors, including personal character and conduct; relationships with students, other school personnel, and parents; and academic skills and effort. The following standards address these three categories.

Objectives

1. To promote high-quality standards of education
2. To provide teachers with a well-defined sense of expectations
3. To provide a clear guideline for teacher evaluation

I. Personal characteristics

- A. Spiritual life and brotherhood
 1. A current commitment to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord
 2. Membership in good standing with a conservative Anabaptist church
 3. Submission to the authority of God's Word and the local congregation
 4. Desire for personal growth
- B. Character qualities
 1. Honesty and integrity
 - a) No lying or knowing misrepresentation of the truth
 - b) Sincere attempt to follow through on promises made to others
 - c) Sincere attempt to follow the same standards of conduct expected of others
 - d) Accurate and truthful record-keeping
 2. Moral uprightness
 - a) Avoidance of any suggestive or inappropriate speech
 - b) Consistent modesty in appearance and behavior
 - c) Discretion in guiding sensitive discussions in order to respect and promote purity
 - d) Respect for the privacy of the opposite gender
 - e) Avoidance of inappropriate physical contact

Note: While it may be perfectly fitting for teachers of younger students (primarily sisters) to use non-threatening physical contact, such as pats on the back, hugs, and other positive reinforcement, there should be little, if any, such contact from 5th grade and higher, especially across gender lines. Correction involving physical touch must be limited to paddling in the younger grades, following school guidelines.
 3. Self-control
 - a) Example of temperance in speech and conduct
 - b) Awareness of personal moods and moderation in expressing them
 - c) Attention to personal hygiene, professional appearance, and neatness
- C. Attitudes (*more important than social skills, which may mask poor attitudes temporarily*)
 1. Love for students and a strong desire to see them succeed in life
 2. Love of learning and openness to new ideas
 3. Willingness to take responsibility

II. Relationships

- A. Relationships with students
 1. Professional, yet friendly relationships inside and outside the classroom
 2. Maintenance of confidentiality, except where student wellbeing or legal requirements are at stake

3. Consideration, equity, and justice in direction and correction of student conduct -- *The primary goals of discipline should be redemptiveness and prevention of future misconduct by the student and others.*
 4. Protection of students from disparagement, bullying, or inappropriate criticism from others
 5. Effort to meet individual student needs, including a willingness to go beyond normal teaching methods
 6. Avoidance of favoritism or discrimination on the basis of gender, academic skill, disability, family status, race, or personality
 7. Avoidance of words or actions that adversely affect the student's learning ability, physical or mental health, or safety, including avoidance of anything that could reasonably be interpreted as physical or verbal abuse
 8. Avoidance of any inappropriate or unprofessional personal, written, or electronic communication
- B. Relationships with other staff, school officials (including the school board)
1. Commitment to authority structure within the school
 2. Conscientious and loyal adherence to school rules and guidelines, regardless of personal agreement or disagreement
 3. Respect for school culture, tradition, and conscience
 4. Avoidance of a competitive or adversarial spirit among staff members
 5. Contribution to team spirit, including appropriate handling of complaints
 6. Discretion in speech and maintenance of confidentiality
 7. Integrity in use of school funds and requests for reimbursement
 8. Avoidance of the appearance of a conflict of interest in financial affairs, student issues, or issues with other school personnel
- C. Relationships with parents
1. Recognition of parents' primary responsibility and ultimate decision-making authority for their children
 2. Effort in building positive, non-adversarial relationships with parents
 3. Maintenance of open communication, especially on discipline issues
 4. Maintenance of confidentiality, except where student wellbeing or legal requirements are at stake
 5. Maintenance of clear boundaries between school and home responsibility
 6. Avoidance of undue influence from individual parents on grades and school-related matters

III. Practice and performance *(needs more fleshing out)*

- A. Clearly defined and consistently enforced classroom rules
- B. Command and control of the classroom
- C. Cultivation of an atmosphere conducive to study
- D. Consistent lesson preparation and academic knowledge

Evaluation Checklist

1. Any issues not addressed clearly?
2. Any redundancies?
3. Any improvements to organization?
4. Any issues with word choice or clumsy phrasing?
5. Are there items you disagree with?