

The Worst Teachers

I've been writing a lot about what good teachers do. I've had more than a few myself, like my grade 8 teacher who knew the answer to everything, and was the kindest person I've ever met. Or like my grade 4 and 5 teacher, who, over the course of those two years, managed to teach some of us in that class most of the material from grade 6, so we could skip from grade 5 right into grade 7.

But I've seen some pretty awful teachers too. Not many, but they tend to leave an impression. I won't mention names or places ... some were from my high school years, and some from schools I've taught at, including Worsley ... but I think I'd like to talk about them, as an example of what not to do, ever.

I knew a teacher who had a student who wouldn't stay in his seat, and was always causing problems. Her solution was to duct-tape him to a chair and put him in the closet.

I knew a teacher ... the football coach and PhysEd instructor ... who was supervising kids in his high school class as they were doing gymnastics. One overweight boy was having trouble getting over the vault. The teacher's loud comment to the boy: "Maybe we should get a crane in here to lift you over".

The boy was me.

I knew a teacher who was a very big man, and very strong. Students feared him. When he had unruly students, he would manhandle them out into the hallway, throw them up against a locker, and threaten them with violence. For some reason, all the parents loved him.

I knew a teacher who came to school hung over every day, and sometimes drunk. He taught us Accounting when he was sober, and chewed mints to disguise the smell. He was replaced half-way through the year.

I knew a teacher, in his first year of teaching, who lost his temper with a 'bad' kid and threw him and his desk out the classroom door, with the kid still in the desk. (OK, you've read my other post. It was me. It never happened again, honest!)

I knew a teacher who taught History. But he spent a lot of time in class relating his personal problems. I remember one memorable class when he spent 60 minutes talking about his haemorrhoids, and his upcoming operation ...

I knew a teacher who always yelled. At everyone, even the good kids. He always seemed angry. We tended to ignore him as much as possible.

I knew a principal who spent the entire year in his office. Much of it was spent reading the newspaper. Nice guy, but not very inspiring ...

I knew a kindergarten teacher who liked to regularly give students the 'strap' for the slightest misbehaviour. The strap was a long length of thick studded leather that really hurt when it was whacked across your open palm. Big tough kids would be reduced to tears when faced with the prospect of getting the strap. But in kindergarten??

All right, one of those kids was me. It was nap time, and we got to lay on these thin mats on the huge highly waxed linoleum floor. You could propel yourself around on the floor with your fingertips. It was lots of fun. But the teacher didn't care for it too much ...

I don't mean to give the impression that lots of teachers are not good at what they do. I've known hundreds (thousands?) of teachers, as a student and as a teacher myself, and almost all of them were caring, hard working professionals who did their very best for their students. So maybe I should end this with a few of the good ones!

I know an elementary teacher who always cared so much about all her students, even the 'problem' ones, that she put in long hours every night and on weekends preparing, planning and marking, and truly loved her kids.

I know a school staff member who, although not a teacher, cared so much about students in her school that she did far more for them every day than anyone should be expected to, and people loved her for it. She was the heart and soul of our school.

I know a teacher who was the best teacher I have ever met at the subject he taught, and his students loved him. And he became a principal after just five years and the staff loved him too.

There are lots more good people I could describe, but I think you get the point. The good far outnumber the bad, as in any profession, and especially in teaching.