

The World of the Naughtiest Boy in Class

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It was the first day of my first job as a teacher. I was appointed as a Mathematics teacher in a renowned school of Rawalpindi. The fourth graders who now sat facing me had been shifted here from another branch of the school and all the sections had been shuffled. I decided to begin by selecting a class representative. I asked the children to volunteer for the post. A few of them raised their hands. One of these was a child who had bright black eyes and a smile on his face. This was Omer. Something made me ask him to take the charge for the time being until a proper class prefect election. The other children seemed to find it difficult to accept my decision. One of them came up to me with the utmost concern, 'Ma'am please do not give him the responsibility as he is the naughtiest boy and he always fails two-three subjects in exams.' I was so upset to know this. I believed that he was a bright child who had not been guided well. From this point onward I decided to make guidance and counseling a part of my teaching.

I had done my Masters in Psychology so I took permission from my head-teacher and had a meeting with all the subject teachers to specifically discuss the case of Omer. We went through his reports and learnt that he had been failing in two three subjects regularly for the last one year and was promoted conditionally to this grade.

Then I called the parents. I came to know that Omer was living with his uncle. His mother had died and his father had re-married. He did not have a good relationship with his step mother so he was sent to live with his uncle. Omer's profile was becoming clearer. How important it is to look at the complete picture of our students' lives!

I personally arranged one-to-one meetings with Omer within school hours with the permission of his family and my school-head. I convinced him that he needed to study well

and showed him how to gradually improve his grades in his weak subjects. I provided him support during break time and games period if he needed any help.

A crucial issue was the attitude of other subject teachers. They were not convinced that Omer deserved to be treated with love and care. Two of my colleagues even told me in strong words that I was interfering with their work and I should not be telling them how to treat the child. In a way they were right as I did not have the designation of a student counselor. After a struggle of one term when the exams were held Omer had passed in all but one subject. He did not achieve very high grades in any of the subjects but had 50% marks in most areas. I again had a one-to-one meeting with Omer. I asked about the particular subject that he did not pass. He clearly identified the problem: the teacher was too strict with him. She snubbed him whenever he asked a question or told him to leave the classroom. I had no choice but to report this to the school-head.

The head-teacher took a very positive initiative. She personally requested all subject teachers to treat Omer as a special case and not to be very strict with him. Since it was an order of the school-head, everyone had to follow. I was given the responsibility to communicate regularly with Omer and his family. At the end of the year Omer passed all the subjects obtaining more than 50% marks. More importantly, he showed real improvement in his everyday behaviour as well. The child as well as his family were very happy at the annual day when he received his result card with good remarks from the teachers and the head-teacher as well.

This incident strengthened my belief that being a teacher we must know that our first responsibility is to strengthen a child's personality. Guidance and counseling should be an in-built aspect of teaching. I know I definitely try to make it a part of my teaching.

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