

What Teachers Want Parents to Know

A teacher who has worked in a variety of schools reflects on what his colleagues have had in common.

By [David Cutler](#)



As a high school history teacher who is married to a middle school math teacher and is about to welcome our first child into this world, more than ever I value parents who entrust their children to the care of educators. We have an immense responsibility to teach and prepare other people's children for future success in a caring, safe environment.

Over the years, I've met, worked beside, and learned from teachers of all ages and from all types of schools. Despite the differences between us and between our institutions, we find common ground on what we want parents to know about us.

WE CARE ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S WELL-BEING

We care deeply about our students, and we want them to succeed—not just academically but in every facet of their lives. If a student is struggling, we'll do whatever we can to help turn things around. On a bad day, a student might need just a pat on the back and a little encouragement. At other times, helping students calls for staying after after-school activities to offer one-on-one support. If the need arises, we'll contact an academic support team, as well as parents, to create a plan of action.

In whatever scenario, know that we'll be wondering if that child is feeling better. We'll follow up to make sure the student knows how much we care, beyond the subject we teach. We show as much by cheering on students during their games, attending theatrical performances, complimenting artwork, and appreciating other notable achievements.

WE WANT YOUR CHILD TO SUCCEED

Contrary to what some may believe, no teacher likes seeing a student struggle endlessly. In an ideal world, we would love it if every child excelled in every subject without difficulty, which would also make our jobs easier and less stressful. However, meaningful learning seldom comes without effort for anyone.

Therefore, it's critical to avoid demonizing stress, struggle, and anxiety, which in healthy amounts are essential ingredients of lifelong learning. At certain times, it's true that teachers want students to experience pressure, but not out of a twisted desire to see

them squirm—we want them to gain resilience and resourcefulness in the face of adversity.

WE KNOW THAT LEARNING IS DIFFICULT

When your student encounters difficulty or anxiety with a unit of study or an assignment, please resist contacting the teacher right away—intervening may deprive your child of a chance to develop resilience, self-advocacy, and troubleshooting skills. Instead, encourage your child to advocate for themselves. This could include seeking help from a classmate or initiating a one-on-one meeting with a teacher.

We do want to hear from you if your child experiences sustained struggles and in the case of developments such as health difficulties, the loss of a loved one, or an updated learning profile.

WE KNOW YOUR CHILD HAS OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

We appreciate that students have other classes and commitments beyond what we teach and expect of them. To the best of our ability, we work hard to ensure that we're assigning appropriate amounts of work. If a student comes to us in advance of a due date with a scheduling conflict, many of us are likely to grant extension requests.

In dire circumstances such as urgent family matters or an emergency visit to the hospital, we think only of the student's well-being and not the missed work. When the

student is ready to return to school, we're happy to help them catch up at a manageable pace.

WE CARE DEEPLY ABOUT WHAT WE TEACH

We love what we teach and try to stay current on developments in our fields: reading the latest literature, enrolling in academic courses and programs, and attending meetings and conferences. We also take time to consider what and how we teach. In fact, we tend to spend much of our "time off" in the summer planning out how to do a better job in the fall. We take our disciplines seriously, and we work to instill similar enthusiasm in your children.

This often leads to our rethinking how to engage student interest while helping them see for themselves the real-world relevance of what and how they learn.

Lastly, know that we love what we do, and we work hard every day to make sure that students know that. We want them to feel supported, and we want them to feel secure in knowing that when they stumble (as they all do), we'll be there to help them learn and grow from their mistakes—the best and only way to learn.