

Back to School :

"My Teacher Made Fun of Me!" A parents nightmare or a child's misperception?

Recently, I was most amused by an assessment that came recently from a father. When asked "what kind of learning strategies haven't worked with the child," the father replied with "a teacher made fun of my child."

My first unemotional response to such statements by parents is always journalistic. I investigate with a series of questions, but at minimum: "did you actually witness your child's teacher making fun of your child? Did another child report to you that the teacher made fun of your child?" Most parents answer "no", when faced with these fact finding questions. An educational consultant job is to gently remind parents who are emotionally wired to protect their children that it is possible that the child's learning style perceived the teacher's communication style as "making fun". We also have witnessed that many times parents automatically approach teachers in a combative manner. In my years of teaching, only two parents out of 100 ever called to say "my child is saying this, what's the story from your point of view." Most begin from the point of attack instead of inquisition.

In today's MTV and video game world, teachers are faced with incredible challenge of keeping the attention of children and particularly adolescents. News articles constantly remind us that today's teens in particular are multi-taskers. Many parents don't realize that their teen does homework, while instant messaging friends, watching TV and playing video games and talking on cell phones. Many teachers in local schools report that children no longer sit in classrooms with eagerness and excitement about what they are going to learn in school, they tend to sit in class with the stance of go ahead entertain me. Classes are either too big with 30 students or too small, under 10. Small classes work with 6th graders, but can fail with 8th graders based on the group dynamic and individual personalities.

I do not doubt that there may be a few inexperienced teachers in combination with little to no school administration mentoring. Additionally, in today's world, perhaps some are even teaching with such high personal distress in other areas of their life that it might likely spill into a classroom with an immature student population. For example,

I knew a teacher who was dealing with two terminal illness in his birth family, plus two mental illness of his wife and son. Every night he went home to an out of control teen that constantly was threatening his life and more. I was amazed at his strength, but human he had his moments. Bottom line, teachers are human just like everyone else and sometimes their own worlds are turned so upside down that teaching is their only safe haven. If immature, high-need emotional students in that safe haven constantly misbehave, this harmless act can be the small straw that breaks the camels back of even the most professional of people. Frank talk may result to your child as it should.

It's actually more common for teachers to use humor or strategically implemented comments as class management strategies to help maintain order. When a child is constantly talking to their neighbor, disrespecting the teacher while s/he is teaching, interfering with their own learning as well as others, a middle school teacher might ask the child to stop flirting with the other student. This draws attention to the issue in a rather age-appropriate good humored way, letting others know what behavior is expected. This typically gets the desired behavior to quit quickly. Nine times out of 10 the child who is complaining about personal attack from a teacher is actually the one whose behavior is out of step with classroom protocol or student expectations. It's more likely the child is misperceiving constructive directions from teachers. Most teachers will only go negative if everything else fails to work with the child.

What should parents do if they truly feel their child has been transgressed? Your first approach is via casual conversation with the child. The most important thing for parents to do is to remember that they cannot control or repair the child and teacher's relationship at school. Therefore, it's important to talk to your child about the teacher's perspective and help the child come to a point of humanistic empathy for both sides of the situation. If a call is warranted be open to the ADULT on the other end of the phone. Some teachers endure parents screaming at them on the phone, so it's no wonder their child is misbehaving in class. Sadly, what usually happens is a student's parent calls a supervisor or principal, which only empowers the child to continue to misbehave. All issues need to be handled between the

Tutor Tips: Two Common Consumer Mistakes in dealing in the Tutoring Industry



Many parents have valued our last article on working with tutors. While not all need foreign language tutors, they wanted to make sure they would not make any missteps with tutors in other subject areas. Many started asking questions aimed at the tutors point of view. The number one question from many parents:

"What should I be careful to avoid?"

After discussions with our own tutors as well as other tutors we know professionally or socially, here is a concise summary of common response.

Failure to Respect the Tutor's Business

Most tutoring is pursued as a weekly commitment or a short-term fix to an assessed problem. People often overlook the fact that calling a tutor for help and engaging them is actually initiating a business relationship with them. While you may be friendly with your tutor and even occasionally do something social together, s/he is a business owner serving as a consultant, providing you a carefully planned service. Tutors cannot help find grade or study solutions, if students are unwilling to implement suggestions or parents are unwilling to support the advice.

Failure to Value the Tutor's Time

Value the tutor's time as much as you value your own time. Most tutors schedule lessons back to back. Tutors get paid for the appointment time, not the amount of time your child is present. Obviously, your child's punctuality to sessions will help you get the most return on your investment. But it will also help you retain a quality tutoring option. Many tutors say that if their time is repeatedly disrespected, they will simply cancel the client.

Failure to Commit to the Learning Opportunity

Commit to your tutor for a set period of time or a specific number of lessons in advance. While all students are capable of learning in one or two sessions, true productive rapport develops over-time. When you commit to tutoring, a good tutor will commit to helping your student become more successful. Transversely, if you are wishy-washy about your student's needs or your student's availability for tutoring sessions, then a tutor has no logical or emotional reason to commit to you as a client in their schedule. Like most business owners, tutors can choose to decline your business to invest their time in other "patients" who need truly value their help.

Like any "head doctor", most tutors have a cancellation policy. This typically will be 48-72 hours notice, offering the doctor/tutor enough time to reschedule another client. Last minute cancellations because little Johnny doesn't feel like going to tutoring does not exempt the student (or his/her parent) from the financial responsibility of committing to the appointment time. Like doctors appointments, you may owe 1/2 or full service fees for missed appointments.



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ParentDialog: A-san asks B-san

A-san: My daughter is missing the old teacher who left. She says its unclear what the new teacher is doing. They spent a day on something my daughter says she mastered last year.

What can I do to help him process the situation better?

B-san: 1) Assuming its not going to burst his bubble, speak the truth to your son. FirstMore questions visit our FAQ link on www.kanjicamp.info