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TeacherTalk

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Teacher's Day
Special

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WHAT'S IN IT

Teaching: A Profession That Builds Relationships of Trust



Shonali Goswami was an engineering graduate and had a plum job as Vice President of an international motor giant. She was very successful and had nothing to complain about at her job. According to her friends, nobody in their right mind would think of a career switch when he or she was in a job like that. But, Shonali did. And, she switched to teaching in a school. The salary was almost eight times lower and no perks of car, cell phone or a flashy apartment in an upmarket area. But, Shonali did make an unthinkable career switch. Her reason: when she interviewed candidates for a middle management position in her company, she couldn't find even one per cent at a standard that satisfied her. She concluded that the problem lay in our education system. She switched jobs at the cost of her awesome career. It is a different story that her friends chuckled knowingly when she resigned from her teaching position six months later. Her students found her teaching go right above their heads and she openly showed her frustration.

Do you believe that just anyone can teach? Is there a dipstick to sift a possible good teacher from a bad one before recruiting them? Someone you respect highly as a subject expert or another you are in awe of as extraordinarily altruistic might well turn out to be the bane of their students. They might be temperamentally quite outside the circle of whom children consider to be good teachers. Any experienced principal would vouch for the fact that nothing you can learn about candidates before they start teaching can truly help you detect that a good teacher was hidden in him or her. Year after year, principals are surprised by someone who showed no promise whatsoever at the interview later blossoming into a great teacher. The reverse is common too. Someone whose resume featured all that one looked for fails miserably. Is it a myth that anyone with the right qualifications can teach?

Some educationists believe that the experience and knowledge of teachers who are half way through their long tenures seem to be making better teachers than the new candidates with fancy education degrees. Again, this is not always true. An American research organisation has discovered that 'researchers have looked at just about every possible determinant of teaching success, and it seems there's nothing on a prospective teacher's résumé that indicates how he or she will do in the classroom'.

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ADOLESCENCE....

The Charm & the Challenge

ADOLESCENCE... a time in life when children realize who they are. They form ideas on what they would like to be—the time just ripe to forge an identity. Big decisions confront them: career choices to be made, meaningful relationships to be formed and sustained, the fast-changing world with technological advances have to be tackled, attitudes and roles chiseled. Isn't this process of transition fraught with trials and tribulations? Information overload, mixed messages from media, press, teachers, family and society at large, add to the complexity and confusion already present in the young egocentric minds. Adolescence is both charming and challenging and perhaps subtly chaotic too.

A vital stage of growth and development marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is also the stage when young people extend their relationships beyond their parents and family and are intensely influenced by the peer group and the world outside home.

Adolescents, the 10 - 19 years age group, account for one fifth of the world's population and nearly a quarter of India's population. They have very special and distinct needs, which can no longer be overlooked. By addressing their needs one would not only be contributing to the socio-economic development of the country but also in other societal concerns like social harmony, gender equality and population stabilization.

These are truly the years of creativity, idealism, buoyancy and a spirit of adventure. But these are also the years of experimentation and risk-taking, of giving in to negative peer pressure, of taking uninformed decisions on crucial issues, especially relating to their bodies and their sexuality. The environment adolescents grow up in largely determines the manner in which they cope with the challenges. Adolescence is thus a turning point in one's life, a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability.

One's changing body size and configuration evoke a new set of reaction and expectations from parents, peers, and society. Hormonal fluctuations precipitate new feelings and emotional responses, and may take the adolescent by surprise, giving rise to doubts about normalcy, self-discipline, or social acceptability. Societal and intrapersonal pressures to individuate from parents are counterbalanced by recognition of vulnerability. The rights of adulthood are enticing, but the responsibilities may seem oppressive. There is a need to be recognized as a unique individual, yet a fear of being 'different'. Disciplining oneself to sit down and study is difficult when there are so many new urges, interests, options, and potentials to explore. Adolescents want to taste and test the world, often coming into conflict with parents, teachers, or societal rules that attempt to curb their impulsivity or remind them of consequences.

Unless parents are aware of what their children are into, what kind of education they should be given, how much guidance or freedom they need, there will be chances of conflict. Parents need to understand, guide and deal with them tactfully. While excessive freedom may spoil the child complete lack of freedom will prove to be equally harmful. While rules are essential, their implementation should not make the teenager feel like an outcast amongst his friends. Therefore, parents need to handle them with care.

Many changes and adjustments are required in their relationship with parents, friends and themselves. Patience, openness, and understanding from parents can make this phase less confusing.

Parents need to deal with the different circumstances that arise with children in a proactive and diplomatic manner. They need to understand what the child is going through and exercise utmost restraint, guiding and making suggestions in a friendly manner. Unrealistic ambitions for the children and applying excessive pressure on them will only lead to conflicts.

Physical and emotional factors have conspired to designate adolescence as a difficult age for most children. Firstly, urban children, inevitably become more separated from adults due to the changes in the lifestyles and the environment. Secondly, as civilization has become more complex, the stages of human maturation have become increasingly defined, with a definite step-like transition from infancy to adulthood. While some societies ritualize the shift from youth to maturity, those lacking such rites have instead a youth culture, or institutionalized adolescence. Against this background various stage theories have evolved, all commonly portraying childhood, adolescence, and adulthood as relatively distinct stages that can be identified sociologically, physiologically, and psychologically.

Hope and Vision

Coping with stress in a changing world is an uphill task for teenagers. The problems of teenagers should not be brushed aside as something trivial or small. Even the slightest of distress in a teenager when noticed deserves great attention. The parents will have to get to the root of the problem without making the child feel as though he is different or at fault. There are multi-various issues bothering teenagers: development stress, emotional distress, academic pressures, physical stress, financial stress or social distress. It is a huge responsibility of the parents to handhold their teenage children through all these issues and guide them to healthy adulthood.

The tasks are many but the bottom line is to be able to reconcile and accommodate different realities—for the young ones are indeed the role models of tomorrow.



If you ask some teachers who have stayed on this profession for a good seven years and still enjoyed it, when they found out that they were good at teaching, they say that it didn't take longer than ten minutes for them to realize that they were born to teach. These teachers, having stayed long enough to reach their mid-careers, often make good teachers. However, after choosing this profession, if someone feels that she is not exactly cut out for the job, she shouldn't hesitate to leave, for staying on half-heartedly would result in great injustice to the future of a country. Failing in one profession does not make you a failure. It simply means that you were made for something else. This is what we mean by aptitude—a skill in which you are a natural and you excel in it with ease.

Many believe that a caring teacher works too hard, gives much more than what she takes while a lazy teacher gets away unnoticed for years. In the present system across the world, neither does a caring teacher reap extraordinary benefits nor does a lazy teacher get asked to go. The reason for this is: the supply here is dearer. Why is it so when India has a huge population of educated unemployed? Why aren't they opting for teaching? Teaching is often not the first choice of competent professionals. It would be false to say that we don't have teachers who took up teaching as their first choice but their number is abysmally low.

What can we do to make teaching attractive for the bright, young people who are looking for a satisfying career? One way to deal with it could be to base the reward grades basis the performance. When the private sector entirely bases the career progress of their employees on their performance, why can't schools do so? Teachers can start at the same level but move up to better scales basis their performance. Teachers who show better results (not examination results) should be incentivized, either by way of promotion to the next scale or any other suitable reward. This will motivate teachers who are dedicated, hard working and caring. Presently, there are no differentiators to identify performers and non-performers. This goes against performers as we can ill-afford to lose good teachers after a three-year stint when they start wondering if there is more to life than teach the same thing to different students every year.

Shwetha Lamba has been teaching in a private school located on a hill station. Teaching was her first choice. It is her fourth year in the school. She has immense clarity in how she perceives her job. "I wouldn't call it a calling. It is an interest, at best. I think teaching can be the easiest job or the hardest job depending upon how a teacher wants to look at it. When I got this position, I also had an offer from an advertising agency but I took up teaching. Six months into the job, I was wondering why I was struggling so much for a career that paid so little. Today, I feel differently. This profession grows on you. When you understand the young people who are capable of giving you so much love in return for little, money ceases to matter. The trust, adoration and love that children are capable of showering on you, leaves you happy. Yes. It comes with a little effort. Students like teachers who are presentable, well-informed and to have a sense of humour. A teacher who can laugh with her students is liked and she need not be anxious that her class control will be in danger. A balance is what the students need. Someone who can be firm when needed but relaxed enough to destress the students if need be. I also make special lesson plans for different classes. The same doesn't work with all. Some children need greater challenges than the others. In fact, I love making different lesson plans.'

For Ms Fernandez, who has been teaching for twenty years now, teaching is a matter of creating life-long relationships with her students. She gets a huge number of cards on Teacher's Day. Most of her old students send her cards even today. "Teaching content is a given. I find the most difficult part of teaching is gaining the trust of students. You have to learn to do the hard part, thinking more about the students than just about the content. It is probably the biggest challenge for many career switchers. You don't have to be their buddy, but you certainly have to build relationships of trust. Through that trust students become willing to try what you suggest, or to go further even when they find it difficult at first.

Teachers are hugely responsible for shaping the country's future and we have to collectively devise and support methods to detect good teachers, train them and keep them happy in their job.

Being there...

Macmillan aims at empowering educators in their pursuit of providing meaningful learning experiences for all students and bring them together on one platform through various levels of engagement so as to develop in them talents through a range of enjoyable and constructive classroom experiences "

This program aims at targeting over 500 schools across the country. The program is perceived by key groups, such as principals, teachers, students, and parents to bring about

- **Student creativity**
- **Emotional and social development of students**
- **Leadership skills & Self-reliance amongst students**
- **Sense of good Citizenship amongst the teachers and students**
- **Necessary internationalization of the curriculum**



Macmillan Peer Educator Workshop, Bal Bharti School, Dwarka

TOUCHING LIVES

Macmillan books are reaching the underprivileged children at BAGIYA—a school for slum children run under Sanshil Foundation for Welfare. These books are helping children follow a curriculum that will further support in mainstreaming as many children as possible.

The children at BAGIYA have started using the books and they are extremely helpful to the Teachers as well.



Overheard



'I was substituting for her one day and we played acronyms. Do you know what their acronym for PM's class? Come Late and Start Sleeping!

The others joined in the laughter although they didn't particularly agree with the minority view of PM. Really speaking, the student's had meant it for FM's classes. In the meantime, PM had got in touch with the police, sought help from an NGO and some interested parents. At 5.40 pm, someone called from the bus parking lot. They had spotted a little boy crying, on waking up after a sound sleep. Kunal thought of hiding under the seat to surprise his friends and was waiting for them to look for him. In the meantime, overcome by sleep, he just lay there. Nobody thought of looking under the bus. After all, the perfectionist was perfect. Her head count hadn't gone wrong.

Predictably, FM sniggered the next morning, 'Student as bright as the teacher!'

Disclaimer:

This is just about the funny side of teaching—means no offence to anyone nor does it draw on any one known teacher.

Eavesdropped

Kunal, one of PM's students hadn't reached home that day. She was frantic. She made calls to the other parents whose children Kunal was friends with. She was very sure that she took a head count when her students boarded the bus. Not one was missing. How could this happen? The principal asked PM in a concerned voice, 'Are you sure he took the bus home?' Arjun, another student retorted, 'How can he take the bus home? Kunal is small. The bus is big!'

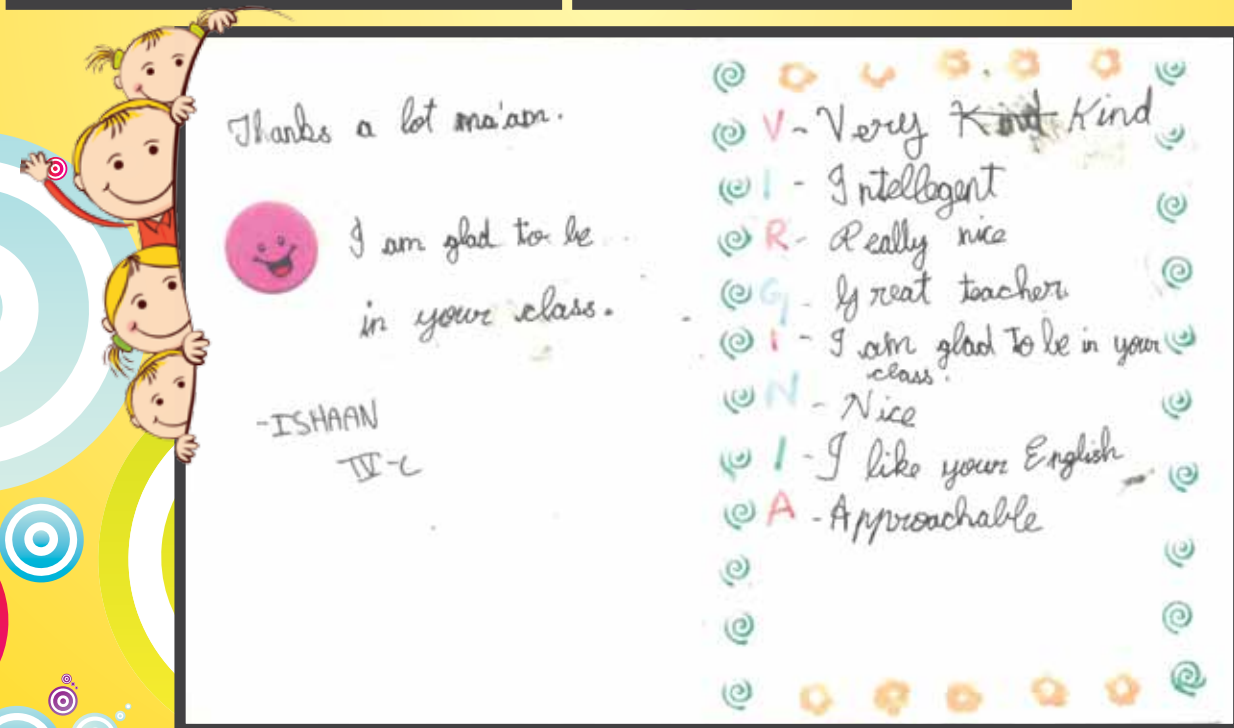
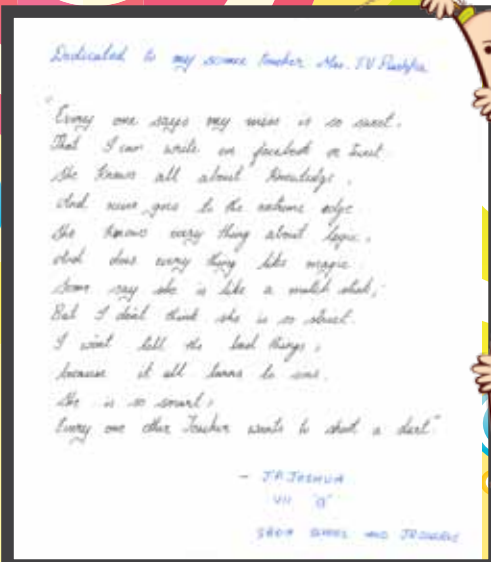
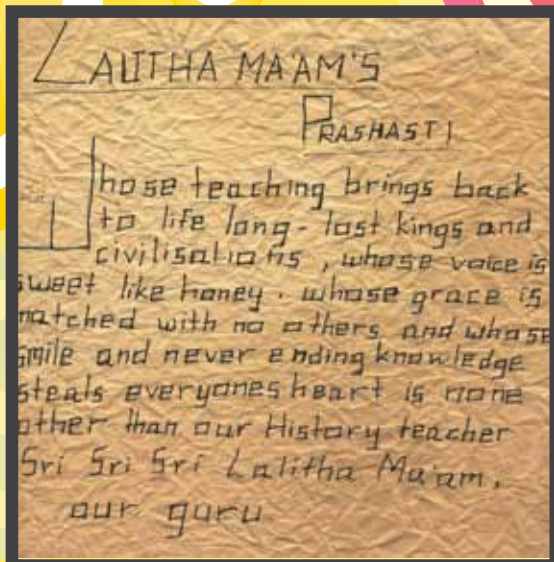
PM felt miserable. It was quite unlike her to let something like this happen. Nobody needs to monitor her work. She was someone who would doubly ensure perfection in everything she was involved in. She asked the bus driver when he noticed Kunal's absence in the bus. He said, 'When I stopped at his stop and saw his Mum waiting.'

The day faded into evening. The other teacher's, led by FM got the gossip machinery charged.

'A giant slip of a giant perfectionist! How can her head count go wrong!!' they gloated.

Her sidekick spurred on the momentum. 'Some perfectionist! I was walking past her class the other day and saw many of her students texting, without looking. They have mastered the skill now.'

Letter to a teacher...



Any entry that we publish will receive a **prize.**

We'd like to hear your teaching anecdotes

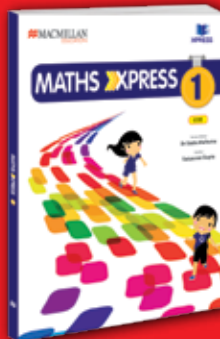
We're looking for funny stories, horror stories, disaster stories, happy stories, sad stories —share your memorable classroom moments with the teaching community here. To send your anecdote, email us at school.marketing@macmillan.co.in



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