



Are You “The Perfect Teacher?”

Who doesn't want to be the perfect teacher? But do you stress yourself—and others—out by demanding perfection at all times? Take this quiz to find out. **BY MARICRIS SIMPAS**

1) You expect the students to always behave a certain way inside the classroom and are quick to correct them if they fall out of line.
 True False

2) You become visibly upset when kids don't give the correct answer.
 True False

3) You give strict guidelines for projects and give deductions to students who don't follow them to the letter.
 True False

4) You dislike students who can't follow the lesson.
 True False

5) You feel that you've failed when a lot of students get low quiz scores.
 True False

6) You follow your lesson plan to the letter in all of your classes, and feel bad when you are not able to deliver the lesson on time.
 True False

7) When checking papers, you tend to look for mistakes in students' work first before looking at it as a whole.
 True False

8) You are always striving to impress your students, parents and your peers.
 True False

9) You're not comfortable with teachers who don't follow your standards.
 True False

10) The deadline is looming, but you feel your work is not good enough. You'd rather miss the deadline than turn in something that isn't to your liking.
 True False

11) You are often afraid to use new teaching strategies because you may not be good at them.
 True False

12) You always comment when another teacher or student makes a mistake no matter how small it is.
 True False

HOW TO SCORE: Add up the number of times you answered “true” to the statements above.

● **9-12 statements “true”** – You are probably a perfectionist. You tend to have very high expectations and push yourself and others to the limit. You may even feel like a failure when things don't go your way. Your drive is commendable, but your fear of failure is causing you unnecessary stress and putting pressure on others. There's a difference between success and perfection; the first is attainable, the second is not.

● **5-8 statements “true”** – You have perfectionist tendencies. You aim for high standards, but back down when it does not seem possible. You become upset when things don't go your way, but you don't let your feelings affect the outcome. However, you're probably quite critical of yourself and others. Catch yourself when you see that you're giving in to the need for perfection and relax before moving forward. You'll see that life will be more fun and satisfying!

● **1-4 statements “true”** – You are likely to be a realistic individual. You set goals for yourself and your students that are attainable. You can adapt to change and welcome it when it can further enhance learning. You can accept failure and learn from it. You are easily satisfied by students who are simply trying their best, which in turn boosts their self esteem. Your teaching style is likely to be relaxed and healthy. Good going!

LOOSEN UP!

Perfectionism usually develops in children when adults around them place too much value on tangible accomplishments and criticize them when they don't achieve. Here's how you can put a stop to this self-defeating cycle:

1. Tell yourself and your students that it is ok to make mistakes, because you can learn from them.
2. Look at the effort and not the grade. In this case, the end is not greater than the means.
3. Set realistic goals in and outside the classroom. Work on the next goal only after the first has been accomplished.
4. Stop the criticism. Instead of pointing out errors, simply ask “What can you do to improve this?”
5. Try something new. Don't be afraid of not knowing what to expect. The best results are sometimes the ones that come as a pleasant surprise.



DEAR TITA LITA

Angelita L. Sta. Ana, Ed.D. is the English Schools Division Supervisor of the City of Marikina. She has been an educator for the past 30 years and also does editorial consulting. Through the years, she has inspired and helped many young teachers to grow professionally and personally.

Help! A “manic mother” is after me

DEAR TITA LITA,

I have a slow pupil with an overprotective mother who always comes to school to complain to me about so many things. According to her, the son does not get enough attention from me (but I’m already doing my best with 50+ students in class) and also should get higher grades because the mother reviews him every night (but the boy really struggles academically). What are some ways I can deal with complaining parents like her?

Use this difficult situation as an opportunity to test and exercise your charisma. What do I mean? Well, singer Bono of the rock group U2, for example, has been counted as one of the 100 influential people of the world by *Time* magazine because “he can open any door with his pitch and tone of voice. He magnetizes people. He is regarded as a man of charisma.” With charisma, you too can open the lines of communication and develop good relationships with parents who are difficult to understand.

On a more concrete front, here are some tips and suggestions:

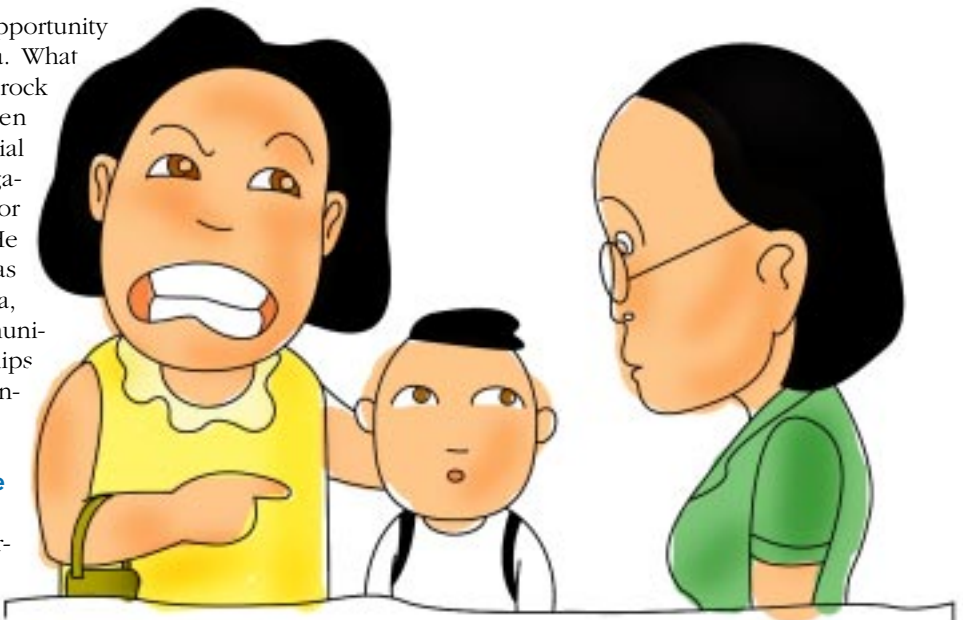
- Respect and understand every parent’s dream of success for their child. With this always at the back of your mind, you can foster a spirit of cooperation with all parents. You have the same goal, after all: to teach and mold their children for life-time learning. Involve all the parents in articulating and achieving your class goals.
- Discover the unique potentials of this particular parent. Does she have a skill or talent that she can share with you and your class to help you achieve your goals? Getting her on your side will help her to back down, and you might even be able to build a friendship with her.
- Always be cordial. Teachers, of all people, need to have excellent public relation skills. Be open, patient and sincere; persevere and maintain an open line of communication with parents that is gentle and encouraging. This sets the mood and tone for many future discussions.

If these don’t work, here are other things you can do:

- Conduct a special parenting session (or you may even decide to have regular sessions) with all mothers and fathers so as not to single out the one concerned. At the talk,

discuss your teaching approaches for high achievers, average students, and slow learners. Openly discuss your grading system, your activities, and how you plan to deal with the unique strengths and weaknesses of your pupils. This level of transparency will not only reassure all parents that you have no biases, but will also help them support the learning of their own child.

- Invite resource speakers to open the minds of parents to learning issues. You don’t have to do this alone. Work



with your principal, co-teachers, and supervisors. Possible topics include: self-paced learning activities for underachievers; intrinsic and extrinsic motivators; teacher-parent partnerships that address learning gaps; and so on.

If none of these tips work, just remember: by mixing common sense and creativity, you might come up with a brilliant solution. Don’t stop trying! As poets say, “the darker the night is, the brighter the stars up above seem to shine.” You may be one of our brightest stars in the teaching profession.

DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM?

Write to Tita Lita! Send your letter to:
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