

Should we just keep flags at half-staff always?

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“A Teacher’s Life”

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It is concerning. Recent newspaper articles cite the lack of teachers interested in teaching at the college level. Worse, there’s declining interest in becoming a public school teacher. Few professions are more rewarding and worthwhile than teaching, so it’s worrisome when there’s a decline in commitment toward a profession in education. As suggested, this decline could be due to teachers’ stress at being accused of offending students -- teachers fearing pupils who intimidate teacher to dance to their cultural tune: “Your words offend me, you’re racist.” Watch out, we’re warned, lest every offense turn into a Star Chamber punishing offenders. This argument might merit rational discussion. Who wants gun-shy teachers? Although, lest we disparage the exciting dynamism of youth today, weightier factors might include outrageous college costs and declining enrollments forcing layoffs. Enough with complaints smacking of conclusions in search of problems. We place dunce caps upon all those who substitute perceptions and opinions over knowledge and truth.

Let’s ask teachers about their concerns. What makes them wonder if they should remain as teachers or whether they regret having rejected entering another profession? Is the teaching profession the only profession experiencing a decline in interest and commitment? Try finding qualified pastors these days. Or police. Or soldiers. Or social workers. Or nurses. How’s the recruiting department at Geisinger doing? Who’s eager nowadays to serve an increasingly peevish, self-righteous, and selfish public – their sensitive nerve endings trailing outside their bodies everywhere, as psychologist Friedman’s fable mischievously teases – where schools sit on the stomping grounds.

One young teacher (non-Danville) shared some recent school experiences, such as dealing with a girl who tried to commit suicide in the girl’s bathroom. Parents clamor for school play tickets. She’s been blamed by parents for their kid’s lack of academic success. Are they helping them do their homework? Wouldn’t you sigh wearily over familiar tirades every contract negotiation? Would the complainers try teaching for week? Given the hours our young teacher works, taxes would increase were teaches paid instead an hourly wage. Consider the pressures of meeting increasing special needs, where, sadly, there’s an increase in desperate parents seeking Individualized Education Programs.

Do we appreciate that our school district is the only institution that connects our entire community? Given the weakening of our other institutions, schools remain vital for helping our children learn but also as resources for emotional growth, maturity, character, hygiene too. We ask schools to become foster-caregivers. Local talent could help out.

Then (only in other districts) there’s pressure in making sure star athletes get passing grades. Parents get annoyed that a teacher’s standards threaten their darling’s grade point average, so their kid takes an easier course at a nearby university. Never here, surely. Our teacher talked about a young man, a frequent-flyer troublemaker, who brought his friend into the school who isn’t a student. Other students initially failed to disclose he was carrying a gun. When finally alerted, school security officers didn’t know what to do – the kid already had left the building. Guns? Let’s talk about active shooter drills. Let’s talk about the foolishly misled suggesting how kids will be safer if teachers are packing, how the problem isn’t guns. I tremble imagining one of my former gym teachers armed. Should we just keep flags at half-staff always?

Consider constantly looking over your shoulder lest you be targeted for teaching something injurious to their sensitive child’s precious ego. How many teachers suffer knotted stomachs worrying about DeSantis-land criminal indictments for teaching history, art, literature, with fringe zealots become bounty hunters. Talk about your thought police. Our young teacher had to deal with mugging kids, obnoxiously wearing “Let’s Go Brandon” T-shirts to class. Would you enter or remain in a profession where some students in the hallways or parents at school board meetings bluster like Macaque Monkeys exhibiting dominance displays?

Our teacher finally shared how the conspiracy mill spun stupidly wild following her school board’s invitation for the tiny number of transgendered kids to share their stories so that the board members could listen and learn. This intelligent act ignited rabid conspiracies. Rumors spread rampant that the school was promoting transgendering and even planned a drag show. Nervous parents were whipped up by this nonsense. Others feared violence against the school. Only five students showed up for class. Welcome to the extra homework in a teacher’s day. Still, conflict is a teachable moment. Deep breaths, please.

Bless those who, despite what’s squeezing them, still love teaching because they love the kids more.