



As an employee, your first responsibility is to the school for which you work. When speaking about your school and your colleagues or other employees, you should portray both in a positive light. This is easier said than done, especially if you're caught in the heat of the moment and upset over a new policy, the latest procedure, or are having personal issues with another staff member. In these situations, the best thing to do is keep quiet. Never ever speak poorly of anyone at your school or the school itself, especially to parents—even if you feel you have a close relationship with them. It is unprofessional. Schools are notorious for gossip among both teachers and parents. Don't share any information that you wouldn't feel comfortable with everybody knowing.

### **Working with other Teachers**

As a newbie coming into the education field, you are filled with wonderful ideas and are probably quite excited and eager to get into your classroom and teach the students everything. That's the best part of being a new teacher, the passion you have for teaching and for your students. Don't let the negativity of a burned out teacher dampen your enthusiasm.

Once you get into your new school you will begin to meet other teachers and staff members, many of whom have been in education for many years. Be cautious about what you say and how you interact with the staff. You do not want to come across as a "know it all," or as being "cocky;" on the other hand, you may feel that if you ask a lot of



**Be confident, but not arrogant.**

questions others may think you're unsure of yourself. Remember—everyone was new at something once, so don't be afraid to ask questions. You're new to the school and new to teaching so ask whatever questions you feel are necessary. Try directing your questions to some of the veteran teachers on staff.

Veteran teachers have a lot to offer you, so keep an open mind and pay attention to what they say and do. Many new teachers often make the mistake of seeing veteran teachers as stuck in their ways, unwilling to try new things, and boring. You must realize that most veteran teachers have seen the educational spectrum go full circle. They've been through the debates of phonics, whole language, open classrooms, heterogeneous grouping, homogeneous grouping and everything in between. They've had to deal with every type of parent, every type of student, every type of principal and every type of teacher. They know the ropes, the ins and outs, the pros and cons, as well as the ups and downs, and, because of this, most veteran teachers are an asset to you.

*After teaching fourth grade for several years, I started teaching second grade in a new school. One of the other teachers had been teaching second grade for thirty years. When we sat down to discuss curriculum I found her lessons, for lack of a better word, boring. She wasn't doing any of the new and exciting concepts being touted in the educational field so I pretty much did my own thing that year. The following year she moved to another state and it was only after she left that I had realized the opportunity I missed. She had possessed so much knowledge about how to give children a strong foundation for the later grades, and although I found her method of teaching less than exciting, I had to admit that her students left her classroom in June with all the exit skills needed to be successful in the next grade. From that one experience, I've gained so much respect for teachers who have been in the field for a long time.*

## ***When You Have a Problem with Another Teacher***

The two biggest complaints teachers have about other teachers are they don't pull their weight and they won't work as a team.

For the most part, when it comes to disagreements with your co-workers, you're going to have to put up with the situation as best you can. As a child, there were probably children in your class that you did not like. As an adult, there will probably be people in your workplace that you do not like. Do as your mother taught you and follow the "Golden Rule" to treat others as you wish to be treated. Your job is not to regulate what the other teachers do. Your job is to teach to the best of your ability—it's the principal's job to deal with the other teachers. Even if you think the principal doesn't know what is going on, she probably knows much more than you think.

If a situation with another teacher gets to the point where you absolutely can't deal with it anymore, the first thing you must do is speak directly to the other teacher. You never know, maybe the two of you can work it out. If, however, you can't solve the problem together, talk to the principal. Be as unbiased as you can as you explain the situation and be prepared to have the other teacher pulled into the conversation to solve the problem. But also be prepared for the fact that the problem might not get solved, and you'll just have to work around it.



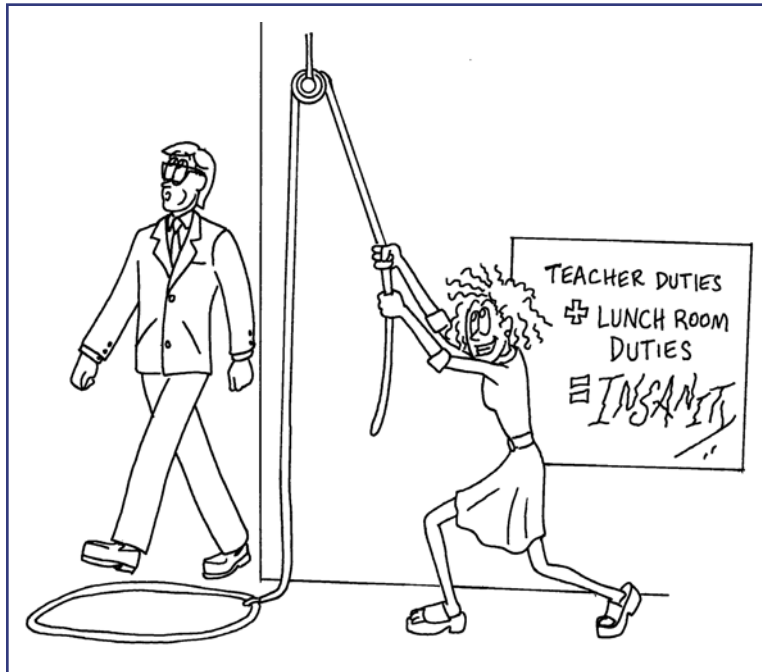
***Try to handle problems yourself first before going to the principal.***

## **Communicating with the Principal**

Think about the problems you might encounter in your room with the various students and their parents. Now multiply that by the number of classes in your school and you'll have a better understanding for what your principal has to deal with each day.

What you may see as a huge problem may be seen as something less important by the administration. When dealing with your principal keep these thoughts in mind:

- Don't run to your principal for every little thing. If you're constantly going to the principal with problems, you may be perceived as a complainer. Instead, use your mentor for advice on how to solve the problem.
- If you eventually have to seek your principal's advice be prepared to explain what the problem is, how you've tried to solve it and any other possible solutions to the situation you think viable.
- If an issue with a parent or student could escalate, let your principal know immediately. Parents or other staff members will often go



*An emotional response is not a good first approach when dealing with your principal.*



**Introduce yourself to the office and maintenance staff.**

directly to a principal if they have a disagreement with you, and you don't want your principal to hear about a negative situation in your classroom from someone else. Make sure you give the principal a heads up about any potential problems headed her way.

## Communicating with other Staff

The staff at your school is not limited to your fellow teachers. It includes everyone involved in the daily running of the school. Make sure you introduce yourself to and establish a relationship with the person who runs the office as well as the head of the maintenance staff. As you work on developing a lasting relationship with these people, keep in mind that they usually work all year long, they don't get the same holidays as teachers, and they don't get near the appreciation and of accolades that they truly deserve.



During my first year teaching first grade there were four of us, all new to both the school and the grade. Three of us got along famously and had very similar teaching styles. The other teacher, however, was a different story. He wanted to stick solely to the curriculum, not do any outside projects, and had a worksheet-based teaching style. All four of us were concerned because it was a small school and we had been told from day one that we had to work as a team. For the longest time we all tried to work together, but I was becoming more and more frustrated with the situation. I also found I was compromising my teaching style because the other teacher didn't want to do the same types of projects as I did. Finally the three of us went to the principal because, despite the myriad conversations we had had as a four-person team, we felt we could not solve this problem on our own. We explained that although we all had tried hard to work together, the three of us were frustrated with trying to change our lessons and objectives to fit in with his teaching method, and we felt our teaching was suffering because of it. We were told to include the other teacher as best we could, but to teach how we wanted. We were also told that it was not our job to police the other teacher. Basically we just had to deal with it (which we did), but I also learned a valuable lesson: though you should always try to find a solution to your problem, there just might not be one and you'll just have to make the best out of the situation that you can.