

CHALK MARKS ON THE HEART

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It is a weight and a responsibility being a Grade 6 teacher. Children at this age are already ready to leave the cozy world of elementary school and make their first steps into the world which is more broad and more difficult to get used to. It is not only that teachers are supposed to sharpen their academic bases but also that they are supposed to develop their values, robustness, and readiness to a new chapter of their lives. It is a profession which requires patience, commitment and endless hours of unrecognized efforts.

Reality of teaching as it is not limited to the classroom. Instruction, lesson planning and mentoring are accompanied by a lot of paperwork reports, forms and requirements that sometimes extend beyond the normal school hours. Teachers are often torn between the administration requirements and the learner requirements. The paperwork at times appears to be interminable taking away the energies that can be used in more constructive activities with the learners.

These burdens notwithstanding, there is an untold, almost silent fact, the influence of a Grade 6 teacher, which does not cease with the school year. Many years after, when students have already entered the realm of high school, they are still not able to forget about the teacher who helped them to be guided during the last year of elementary school. Even such a basic thing as a greeting in the hallway, a friendly smile in the community, or even a thank you message left by a former pupil is a reminder that it was not always in vain.

This long-lasting relationship is talking about something more than grades or lessons. When students are at a vulnerable age, in between childhood and adolescence,

the nurture and attention of a teacher impress deeply. A few kind words, patience during downfalls and the constant confidence in them, all becomes a memory that makes the students even after exiting the classroom.

In fact, the real legacy of a Grade 6 teacher does not lie in piles of paperwork done or in well-organized reports. It resides in the hearts of the learning learners. They have it in their trust, in their success and in their principles. Perhaps the ultimate validation of the vocation of a teacher is to make oneself memorable to their students, the evidence that regardless of the difficulties, it is all about transforming lives.

Ultimately, the pressure of the profession is still great, but it is offset by the long-term appreciation of the former pupils. It is a privilege to know that you are remembered, even on the new levels of learning they are going into, and it makes you realize that the sacrifices of teaching have not been unnecessarily wasted on paper. It is the silent victory of being a Grade 6 teacher: to be a permanent figure in the tale of a child.

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