

TEACHERS AS THE SIERRA MADRE: THE UNSEEN GUARDIANS OF EVERY LEARNER

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Teachers have a profound impact on the lives of many students outside of the classroom. They are not just teachers; they are also mentors, counselors, and, in many cases, second parents. Like the Sierra Madre mountain range, which is tall and strong, protecting communities from storms, teachers provide their students with stability, safety, and direction. Their impact goes beyond grades and lesson plans. They help students learn values, attitudes, and life skills that they will utilize throughout their lives.

Students learn more than just math, science, or history in the modern classroom. They also learn how to interact with others, develop emotional intelligence, and make moral choices. The way teachers act and think has a significant impact on this learning environment. A teacher who is kind, patient, and involved can inspire students to become curious, strong, and confident. On the other hand, teachers who seem uninterested, mean, or hard to talk to my unintentionally make it harder for students to learn and grow as people. In this way, teachers are like the "Sierra Madre" of the classroom, providing students with the strength, shelter, and safety they need to succeed. Being a second parent does not mean taking the place of a child's family. Instead, it means adding to the advice that parents give. Many students spend a significant amount of time at school, where they often spend more time with teachers than with their families. During this time, teachers serve as role models and mentors, helping students navigate a range of problems, from academic tasks to personal and social issues. For example, a student who lacks confidence may benefit significantly from a teacher's support, just as a child in a challenging family

environment may find solace in a sympathetic educator. Teachers offer a unique blend of mental and emotional support that helps their students grow and thrive.

Teachers who act like second parents also help shape moral and social values. In addition to teaching students in school, they also instill in them the values of respect, empathy, honesty, and responsibility. They show students how to act in a good way, settle disagreements fairly, and give them chances to work together and solve problems. For instance, group activities, peer mentoring, and class discussions provide students with opportunities to work together, learn how to lead, and develop effective strategies for resolving disagreements positively. Students acquire skills and values that are essential for both academic and personal success through these interactions.

In the Philippines, the protective role of teachers is even more critical. Many students have problems like poverty, natural disasters, and social instability that can make it hard for them to go to school, stay focused, and feel good overall. Schools are often safe places where kids can get structure, help, and support. In these cases, teachers who act as second parents provide students with stability that they may not have at home, which helps them cope with problems and become stronger. Programs that combine teaching with counseling, mentoring, and teaching life skills are great examples of how teachers can do many different things, just like the Sierra Madre stays strong in storms.

Teachers have an impact on more than just emotional support; they also have a measurable effect on academic success. Research indicates that constructive teacher-student relationships enhance motivation, engagement, and knowledge retention. Students who feel supported are more likely to get involved, try new things, and keep going when things get tough. Teachers who show commitment, patience, and understanding create classrooms where students want to learn because they are interested and confident, not because they are afraid. The Sierra Madre protects and supports communities, and teachers do the same for students by ensuring they can excel academically, form meaningful friendships, and develop a positive self-image.

Additionally, teachers need to strike a balance between being strict and friendly, as they often serve as second parents. They need to keep trust and openness while enforcing rules and discipline. This balance is essential for helping students learn values instead of just following rules out of fear. When teachers show respect, honesty, and perseverance, their students are more likely to do the same. This has a ripple effect that affects not only their classmates, families, and the community as a whole, but also their own lives. In this way, teachers are more than just teachers; they are builders of character and guides for the next generation.

In conclusion, the Sierra Madre metaphor perfectly describes how teachers are like second parents. They are strong yet caring, strict yet understanding, and always there, yet able to adapt. Their guidance, care, and influence impact not only academic success but also personal growth, moral development, and the ability to recover from setbacks. Teachers are like parents, mentors, and friends to students as they navigate the challenges of being a teenager and the complexities of living in today's world. Teachers ensure that students grow with confidence, values, and the skills they need to navigate life's challenges. They achieve this by being like the Sierra Madre, which protects communities from storms and provides them with stability. Their role as second parents is vital and will last for generations to come.

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