HOW TEACHERS COULD REDUCE BIASES

by:
Virginia I. Serna
Teacher III, Alangan Elementary School

Have you ever felt that someone is biased to you? Or have you ever experienced being biased to somebody?

If you are a teacher, have you ever considered this?

Most of the time, teachers deal with different types of students, and our relationships with them matters a lot. However, there are times that we unintentionally bring biased decisions to them. There were moments that we did not even know how we have treated them. There were times that we made them feel unwelcome and humiliated. What we might be doing is implicit bias. According to perception.org, implicit bias is “having thoughts and feelings that we are unaware of a person or group of people or mistaken about their nature”. We tend to become biased when we have preference to somebody or some people rather than being neutral. These, however, is without our knowledge.

Teachers are one of the individuals who tend to be biased for times they might not even know. This action is oftentimes done inside the classrooms. If this would not be checked, just imagine the implication it would bring to a child, even long after he or she finished his studies. It could still haunt the child as long as he lives, and it would bring him or her the worst feeling and a depressing life.

But we teachers could do something to prevent this. We just have to be more aware of our decisions, take steps to eliminate implicit bias and be more careful in handling our students.
In the blog by Greater Good Magazine, there are four (4) ways for teachers to help reduce biases. They are summed up as follows:

1. **Teachers should always be aware of biases.**

Researchers believe that when teachers become more aware of their biases, it can help them improve their interactions with other people, most especially their students. Knowing about our biases could lead us into making better decisions since we become careful in dealing with others, especially when they came from vulnerable groups. Teachers should also accept the fact that even teachers could be subject to biases. We must really be aware of the things that we do and the feelings that we may bring to other people, particularly the children.

2. **Be emphatic.**

**Empathy**, as defined, is the ability to understand another’s perspective and emotions, and feeling is as your own. This is found important in any social encounter, most especially in teaching. However, there are teachers who tend to give a little understanding over their students and become upset to their behaviors without investigating or knowing what these students are going through. If teachers would be emphatic, they could understand their students better, and they would treat them also better. Teachers should then learn the lives of their students and show them love and care.

3. **Decrease stress.**

Studies show that reducing stress among teachers will most likely to bring them more patience and understanding and that leads to not being biased. They look into situations positively and therefore could reach out to students better. Teachers who are stressed tend to be more negative in dealing with others and this could affect good relationships.

4. **Develop more friendships with others regardless of group, status, age and gender.**
For teachers to become more friendly to others and develop good relationships with them, it may influence their students to do the same. This could also help teachers become more loving as they manage to adjust to different types of people, which in turn they could apply to their diverse learners.

In this part, teachers could be role models to their students and this could bring them positive outlook towards life and relationships.

Maybe this is another burden for teachers to consider, but if you look on the brighter side, you can find the happiness a teacher desires after doing these suggestions. By working on these suggested ways to reduce biases, teachers can make a difference by making the students feel they are loved and welcomed by the persons they have high regards with.

References: