

NOW DON'T YOU FEEL BETTER?

Let me see if I got this right...

You want me to go into that room with all those kids and fill their every waking moment with love for learning. Not only that, I'm supposed to instill a sense of pride in their ethnicity, behaviorally modify disruptive behavior, and observe them for signs of abuse and T-shirt messages.

I am to fight the war on drugs and sexually transmitted diseases, check their backpacks for guns, and raise their self esteem. I'm to teach them patriotism, good citizenship, sportsmanship, and fair play, how and where to register to vote, how to balance a checkbook, and how to apply for a job. I am to check their heads occasionally for lice, maintain a safe environment, recognize signs of potential antisocial behavior, offer advice, write letters of recommendation for student employment and scholarships, encourage respect for the cultural diversity of others, and, oh yeah, always make sure that I give the girls in my class 50 percent of my attention.

I'm required by my contract to be working on my own time summer and evenings at my own expense toward advance certification and a master's degree, and after school, I am to attend committee and faculty meetings and participate in staff development training to maintain my employment status. I am to be a paragon of virtue larger than life, such that my very presence will awe my students into being obedient and respectful of authority.

I am to pledge allegiance to supporting family values, a return to the basics, and to my current administration. I am to incorporate technology into the learning, and monitor all Web sites while providing a personal, but not too personal, relationship with each student. I am to decide who might be potentially dangerous and/or liable to commit crimes in school or who is possibly being abused, and I can be sent to jail for not mentioning these suspicions. I am to make sure all students pass the state and federally mandated testing and all classes, whether or not they attend school on a regular basis or complete any of the work assigned. Plus,

I am expected to make sure that all of the students with handicaps are guaranteed a free and equal education, regardless of their mental or physical handicap. I am to communicate frequently with each student's parent by letter, phone, newsletter, and grade card. I'm to do all of this with just a piece of chalk, a computer, a few books, a bulletin board, a 45 minute more-or-less plan time, and a big smile, all on a starting salary that qualifies my family for food stamps in many states. Is that all?

And you want me to do all of this, and you expect me **NOT TO PRAY?**