

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Island Parenting: Supporting Your Child's Teacher

Opinion / **Published On September 15, 2016 09:33 PM /**

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Do You Share Any Likeness to Ms. Lou's Sarah Pool?

The new school year has just begun. This time of year sends me back to one of, if not my favorite poems of all time. It is a poem that has inspired me as a West Indian poet and dramatist. It is a poem that I have recently whipped out and shared with my sons, who have found such a delight in my reading it. It is a poem that I have also shared with my closest friends especially those who are parents. I hold this poem quite dear. It is my hope that the relationship that I cultivate with my sons' institution of learning and their teachers shares no form of likeness to that of Ms. Lou's Sarah Pool.

The first day of school is usually a “madhouse.” Many parents flock to the teacher wanting to ensure that he or she understands just how brilliant, unique and indubitably special their children are; like Sarah Pool they do the little introduction – ‘Dis is fi-me li bwoy Michal,’ then they state the evident that they have brought their child to school.

Many however do not go on to state that they have brought this child to school to learn or to obey but like Miss Sarah Pool, they plead with the teacher to not treat the child rough and ask that the teacher take time with the child.

The parents then go on to list the child’s quirks or hang ups and then provides instruction on how the teacher should deal with the child when the child fails to listen or follow instructions. In Sarah Pool’s case however, I think she went a bit too far when she asked the teacher to beat another child and in her words, ‘he will frighten and behave,’ that is when he sees this other child being beaten. Isn’t this something?

I bring Miss Lou’s classic poem to your attention, as we ease into the school year, not only so that you could enjoy a good laugh or a smile but most importantly so that you may reflect on your attitude as a parent, so that you may reflect on your attitude towards your child’s education, his or her institution of learning, teachers and even your child’s place within the learning environ.

As a former educator, I can assure you that your child’s teacher knows that each child that steps into his or her classroom is somebody’s world. As the school year rolls on, your child’s teacher will learn every quirk or brilliant thing that there is to know about your child. It would serve you well to initiate and cultivate a great relationship with your child’s teacher to ensure your child’s success in the classroom and before I leave you to Miss Sarah Pool, let me tell you that it would more than serve you well to respect your child’s teacher and also require that your child do the same. Happy Parenting and here is Miss Sarah Pool.

New Scholar by Dr. Louise Bennett-Coverley – Miss Lou

Good mahnin, Teacher — ow is yuh? My name is Sarah Pool. Dis is fi-me li bwoy Michal An me just bring him a school. Him bawn one rainy day, ma’am, it Was comin awn to night — Ugly baby grow pretty fi true, For dis one was a sight. Him bawn de week when Rufus Jack-fruit tree did start fi bear, Is dat same mont Oby pig dead — But me figat de year. We call him Mi, Mike, Mikey, Jay, Jakey, Jacob, Jack, But him right name is Michal Jaco'b Alexander Black. No treat him rough, yaw, Teacher; Him is a sickly chile: As yuh touch him hard him meck nize' Some people seh him pwile. Teck time wid him yaw teacher- If him rude an start fi rave Dis beat annoder bwoy , an him Wi frighten an behave. For nuff time when him rude a yard An woan hear at all Ah jus beat de bed-poas hard, mah, An yu waan fi hear Jack bawl! Now dat yuh know hi, lickle ways Ah not havin no fear Dat anything wi mel him, so Ah lef him in yu care.

Which Teacher Should Be Most Accountable?

“In one year a child spends: 7800 hours at home & 900 hours at school which teacher should be the most accountable.” Jim Trelease author of the Read –Aloud- Handbook

“Great teachers will never be able to make up for bad parents, nor should they be expected to.” Taylor Mali

Sage Words from the Parent to the Child

“Teachers open the book but you must enter by yourself.” Chinese Proverb

“No one is dumb who is curious. The people who don’t ask questions remain clueless throughout their lives.” Neil deGrasse Tyson

“The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying small stones.” Confucious

Gentle Reminder to the Parent

“Each child is a unique person so raise your child taking this fact into consideration.”
Raldo Banovac

Quotes on Education and Learning

“Education is a shared commitment between dedicated teachers, motivated students, and enthusiastic parents with high expectations.” Bob Beauprez

“Education is not the training of facts but the learning of the mind.” Albert Einstein

“An education isn’t how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It is being able to differentiate between what you do know and what you don’t.”
Anatole France

“The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill; the willingness to learn is a choice.” Brian Herbert

“Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.” Chinese Proverb

Recommended Reading for Children

Kitty Kat, Kitty Kat Are You Going to School by Bill Martin and Michael Sampson,
Illustrated by Laura J. Bryant

This School Year Will Be the Best by Kay Winters, Illustrated by Renee Andriani

Dear Teacher by Amy Husband

If You Ever Want to Bring an Alligator to School Don’t by Elise Parsley

Back to School Rules by Laurie B. Friedman, Illustrated by Teresa Murfin

Ms. Malarky Leaves No Reader Behind by Kevin O’Malley, Illustrated by Judy Finchler

Brand new Pencils, Brand new Books (Gilbert and Friends) by Diane deGroat

Amelia Bedalia’s First Day of School by Herman Parish, Illustrated by Lynn Avril

Feature Image: Trisha Matthews teaching fourth graders in Brooklyn. (Credit Ruth Fremson/The New York Times)

