



Professional Judgment is Needed When Using Teachers Pay Teachers

By Educator Barnes – February 10, 2021

Teachers Pay Teachers (TpT) is a platform where teachers can upload lessons that other teachers can buy. Teachers are professionals and should be experts in their content. This seems like a great way for teachers to find resources and a way for teachers to make extra compensation. Teacher compensation is a topic that is debated every year. Instead of waiting around for compensation, some teachers are monetizing their expertise. The problem is some lessons are not lessons that other teachers should use. Some teachers in Wisconsin found this out the hard way.

Students at Patrick Marsh Middle School in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin were given an assignment that stated "A slave stands before you. This slave has disrespected his master by telling him 'You are not my master.' How will you punish this slave?" The response students were supposed to give was, "cut off his ear." The assignment was about Hammurabi's Code. When students learn about Mesopotamia, they typically learn about King Hammurabi and his code of laws to keep order. What purpose does it serve for students to pretend to punish an enslaved person? What academic standard does this question address?

Students can learn about punishments for enslaved people in Mesopotamia or other places in the world without pretending to be a master of enslaved people issuing the punishment. The teachers who used the lesson were suspended and the school district issued an apology to the families. Later, the school district demanded an apology from TpT for selling a "racist activity" on their website. The resource has since been removed and is no longer for sale. However, the teachers who used the lesson must learn how to better identify resources to use.

Teachers take a risk buying lessons from other teachers through TpT. Although there are guidelines teachers should follow before uploading lessons to monetize, it seems that problematic lessons are found after they have been used instead of being prevented from being sold in the first place.

School districts must go beyond suspending teachers and issuing letters of apology. They must help teachers avoid these missteps in the future. TpT can be a valuable resource to teachers. There is nothing wrong with teachers monetizing their lessons. Even I have three resources available for sale on TpT. One resource is free and the other two resources are \$2.50.

However, before using any resource for TpT or other sources, teachers should read through it multiple times. Next, they should determine any possible issue or misconceptions students may have from the lesson. Last, the resource should help students learn academic standards and skills. TpT can help teachers from staying up late at night to create their own lessons, but whether the teacher created the lesson, or it was created by another teacher, the teacher who implements the lesson is responsible for the content.