

Mothers who teach face full load day, night

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It's tough being a teacher without honor in your own home.

A thankless job during the day is followed by another one at night.

"Once in a while, my son might question the way I am helping him," said Kori Gross, who teaches English as a second language at North High School in Phoenix. "His dad will say, 'Michael, you know your mom is a teacher. She knows how to do it.'

"He's not too appreciative of those comments."

A 2005 study by the University of Massachusetts addressed the load carried by mothers who are schoolteachers.

"The teacher who is also a mother seems to have assumed two very all-consuming and committed roles," the author said, in a fit of understatement.

Gross, whose son Michael, 8, is in the second grade, acknowledges that it can be strange wearing her two hats.

"One year I attended a meeting concerning my son's reading level, which at that time was slightly below level," she said. "It was very awkward for me, because I felt that I hadn't done enough to prepare him in reading.

"Yes, my son's teacher knows that I am also an educator."

Stephanie Beckert, a special-education teacher in the Creighton School District in Phoenix, faced a similar situation when one of her sons was in the sixth grade.

Beckert agreed with the teacher that he should be tested for a learning disability.

"I know it was difficult for her to suggest testing, especially since I am a special-ed teacher," she said. "My son was tested and shown not to have a disability except for laziness!"

Beckert said her three children resented the fact that she was a teacher when they were in the primary grades.

"They realized I knew what was expected of them and allowed no excuses in completing their assignments and projects," she said.

Gross said her teaching style at school is similar to what she uses at home with Michael and his 2-year-old sister, AnnaSofia.

"I make lessons that try to include different learning styles," she said. "I use lots of different approaches to get the message through, whether that is about the study of literature or how to pick up after yourself.

"If my son were to be a student in my class, I think he would be very successful."

Truth be told, Mom's position as a teacher does have its advantages. It can be used as the ultimate trump card.

"It's funny when Michael tells his friends that I'm a teacher," Gross said. "Once, I heard him say, 'You better not say that again. My mom is a teacher, and you know teachers don't like potty talk.' "