

## THIS IS THE BOOK BOSSES DON'T WANT YOU TO READ!

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE  
BIG, BAD BOSS?



How to Survive 13 Types of  
Dysfunctional, Disrespectful,  
Dishonest Little Dictators

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### A TEACHER'S DILEMMA

*"...I'm not sure if you can help me because I don't work in business. I'm a high-school [core subject] teacher and I have worked at the same school for [over 10] years, but I have a big problem with my boss. She's a newly promoted Vice Principal [VP] and she's new to our school. We're an urban school with lots of problems and lots of failing students every year. She's here to improve the school's image by raising the grades and increasing the number of graduates. That's where my problem comes in.*

*"Last year, only 30% of my students passed. The VP came to me directly, she went around my Department Chair [immediate boss], and told me that I can't fail more than 3 students per class this year. I said: 'Do you mean you want me to pass students who don't do any of the work, fail all the tests they take, cut class or are just absent most of the time, and make trouble when they are here?' She said: 'That's right.'..."*

*"I don't want to give out passing grades to students who fail. That's a lie and it doesn't help them. I want us to find a way to get these students and their parents to take their education seriously...I'm afraid I'll be fired if I don't do what she says... Can you give me any advice?"*

Dear Teacher,

As I understand your situation, your dilemma is in trying to remain true to your principles at the risk of undesirable personal consequences. Your Vice Principal fits the profile of "The Dumbfounder" type of bad boss described in Chapter 5 of *Who's Afraid of the Big, Bad Boss?* Here are two excerpts:

"Dumbfounder Bosses measure the wrong things and measure results in the wrong way."

"Dumbfounder Bosses want you to lie, or at least not tell the whole truth, when actual results are not as good as they want them to be, but they will not say so directly."

As a government employee, you have an advantage over many employees in private industry: laws that regulate the administration of your job. Determine what your state's law says about administering school grades (also check federal law). If you belong to a teachers' union, a steward can help you find these laws. Then, tell your VP that you are following the law and if she wants you to do something else, she must give you that direction in writing, and date and sign it. She probably won't do that, but you will have found support for sticking to your principles.

Next, there are the potentially undesirable personal consequences to address. You will probably not be fired for failing more than 3 students in a class if they legitimately failed, but watch out. Your VP may look for other reasons to make a case for firing you—using distorted or made-up "facts." You have three career choices: quit your school system and lose your benefits; stay where you are and let happen whatever is going to happen; or transfer to another school in the same system but with a different VP. Quitting without having another job already lined up is not a good option if you depend on your income. And if this new VP is going to remain at your school for more than one school year, staying could be risky to your career.

I suggest that you prepare to transfer to another school that operates consistently with your principles before this VP does something to tarnish your reputation. Update your resume and start inquiring about other teaching positions—now—before others in your situation start doing the same thing and increase the competition for jobs. Continue to do the best job you are capable of doing while you search for another teaching job. Consider the impact a transfer may have on your family and lifestyle before you act on it. Chapter 14, *Basic Bad-Boss Survival Strategies*, and the Appendix, *Where to Find Help*, address these strategies in more detail.

Best of luck to you.