

Good teachers are diverse and unique. Methods that make one teacher effective may not work for another. There are specific attributes all good teachers share in common. It's worthwhile to consider these when beginning a teaching career. These attributes are revealed when teachers ask themselves the foundational question, why teach? "These reasons are often unarticulated and more complex than one imagines. Yet they have significant effects upon everyday work with students and on the satisfaction and strength the teacher gets from that work. Consequently, it makes sense, if you are thinking of becoming a teacher, to begin questioning yourself and understanding what you expect from teaching and what you are willing to give to it" (Canestrari and Marlowe, 2010, p. 23). The answer to this question, why teach, can determine the length and success of a teaching career. A good teacher has a lasting motivation to teach, has the right goals, and has specific qualities.

Teaching is a demanding yet rewarding career. To be a teacher means to be continuously motivated. Teachers have the ability to impact students' lives dramatically, both positively and negatively. A good teacher consistently works to have a positive and lasting impact on their students' lives. Additionally, good teachers possess a love of knowledge and understand that teaching is not just giving knowledge but also learning from and with students. Good teachers understand that students learn best through personal experiences and strive to create a climate of discovery in the classroom. Teaching through inquiry requires flexibility in a teacher, who must be able to direct and redirect students' learning and experiences. Movement and change are a constant factor in the classroom. A teacher cannot be stagnant in their practice but must always be seeking to improve and strengthen their practice in order to fully meet the needs of all students. Finally, a good teacher must be able to maintain an optimistic attitude to deal with the many stressful aspects of the career.

In the world of education today, a great deal is asked of teachers. With each year, and the implementation of new policies and teaching practices, more is expected of them. A good teacher is able to prioritize his or her goals, and while it is a balancing act, they are able to focus on what is most important. To begin, it is necessary that a teacher seeks to build an authentic relationship with their students. To invest in the lives of students is to listen to them, know what is important to them, as well as what their strengths and challenges are. In addition, a good teacher expects excellence from each student and works to provide him or her with the necessary tools to be successful learners. An effective teacher will utilize their knowledge of a student to tap into their interests and open a world of opportunity for them as a lifelong learner. Last, a good teacher is a reflective teacher within a reflective classroom. "Reflection involves stepping back from what you're doing in order to achieve some measure of perspective. It means thinking, talking, and otherwise expressing your feelings, the things you've learned, the growth you've achieved, and the sense you have of accomplishing something" (Ellis, 2001, p. 5). A good teacher does not see the aforementioned priorities in isolation, but as a cohesive set of goals to create an enriching learning community.

There are specific attributes that tie all good teachers together. The foremost of these attributes are professionalism and the ability to work hard. Teachers are required to wear many different hats in the professional world. They must maintain open and clear lines of communication with their co-workers and be willing to collaborate frequently. They must learn to communicate with many different groups of people respectfully such as families, community members, and colleagues. Additionally, teachers are placed in a unique situation of power in which they have a significant influence on students. Good teachers serve as partners in the learning process, walking with students as they discover and construct knowledge. "It was clear I was not cut out to be the purposeful kind of teacher who brushed aside all questions, requests, complaints, to get on with the well-planned lesson... I was already dreaming of a school where teachers were guides and mentors, not taskmasters" (Canestrari and Marlowe, 2010, p. 7).

The most fundamental question a teacher can ask is why teach? This question gets asked at various stages of a teacher's career and the answer can vary greatly. Great teachers will always arrive at the same conclusion however. We teach because we see the value in every student and we are motivated to help all students become successful. We teach because we see the whole student and our goal is to cultivate in them the desire to be lifelong learners. We teach because we want to be that teacher a student remembers for the rest of their

life; perhaps even inspiring them to become a teacher. Carl Jung said, "One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feelings. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child" (1875-1961). Great teachers come in all shapes and sizes but they all communicate this warmth through strong motivation, an ability to focus on the important, and through professional attributes, which inspire students to learn.

Sources:

Canestrari, A. S. & Marlowe, B. A. (Eds.). (2010). *Educational Foundations: An Anthology of Critical Readings*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Ellis, A. K. (2001). *Teaching, Learning, & Assessment Together: The Reflective Classroom*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education, Inc.

Outline Draft

I. Introduction

- a. Prior to assuming the privileged role of teacher, it is important to answer the question: Why teach?
 1. There are many reasons: tradition, cynical reasons, power, spending time with young people, etc...
 2. Quote from Marlowe and Canestrari, page 23: Herbert Kohl touching on why it is important to answer this question

II. A good teacher has the lasting motivation required to teach

- a. Have an impact on the life of a child
- b. Share with students a love of learning, often within a content area
- c. Thrive in an environment that is constantly moving and changing
 1. Physically active
 2. A teacher is not stagnant in their own education and practice
- d. Ability to maintain an optimistic attitude throughout challenges and struggles

III. A good teacher has the right goals

- a. Listen to students and build an authentic relationship with them, investing in their lives
- b. Expect excellence from each student and give them the tools to be successful learners
 1. Nurture a reflective classroom environment
 2. Balance knowledge received, knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed (Ellis)
- c. Learn from students (Marlowe and Canestrari, page 24)

IV. A good teacher has specific qualities/attributes

- a. Welcome a challenge and are willing to work hard
- b. Knowledgeable and resourceful
- c. A guide and mentor (Marlowe and Canestrari, page 7)
- d. Professional in conduct, collaborating with colleagues, respectful in communication, establishes appropriate boundaries with students and with school and home.
- e. Reflective in their own teaching practice
- f. Enthusiastic/Passionate for education and for student success

V. Conclusion

- a. A good teacher asks the question: Why teach? Reflecting on this question unearths an answer that serves to further inspire them
- b. A good teacher recognizes that every child has value and that as an effective teacher you can help every child to feel successful
- c. A good teacher is remembered for seeing the child as a whole person, and helping them to become a

lifelong learner

1. Quote from Carl Jung on remembering teachers