

Characteristics of Effective Teachers

Though there seems to be a prevailing assumption that effective teaching cannot be defined, the research literature indicates otherwise. The studies below have identified some of the characteristics of teachers who are defined as "effective" by students, peers, and administrators. It is a good idea to keep this list in mind as you prepare to teach and as you monitor your teaching throughout the semester.

A. Components of Effective Teaching as Perceived by Students (Kenneth Eble, *The Recognition and Evaluation of Teaching*, 1971)

1. *Analytic/Synthetic Approach*
 - a. Discusses points of view other than his/her own.
 - b. Contrasts implications of various theories.
 - c. Discusses recent developments in the field.
 - d. Presents origins of ideas and concepts.
 - e. Gives references for more interesting and involved points.
 - f. Presents facts and concepts from related fields.
 - g. Emphasizes conceptual understanding.
2. *Organization/Clarity*
 - a. Explains clearly.
 - b. Is well prepared.
 - c. Gives lectures that are easy to outline.
 - d. Is careful and precise in answering questions.
 - e. Summarizes major points.
 - f. States objectives for each class session.
 - g. Identifies what he/she considers important.
3. *Instructor-Group Interaction*
 - a. Encourages class discussion.
 - b. Invites students to share their knowledge and experiences.
 - c. Clarifies thinking by identifying reasons for questions.
 - d. Invites criticism of his/her own ideas.
 - e. Knows if the class is understanding him/her or not.
 - f. Has interest and concern in the quality of his/her teaching.
 - g. Has students apply concepts to demonstrate understanding.
4. *Instructor--Individual Student Interaction*
 - a. Has a genuine interest in students.
 - b. Is friendly toward students.
 - c. Relates to students as individuals.
 - d. Recognizes and greets students out of class.
 - e. Is accessible to students out of class.
 - f. Is valued for advice not directly related to the course.
 - g. Respects students as persons.

5. *Dynamism/Enthusiasm*

- a. Is a dynamic and energetic person.
- b. Has an interesting style of presentation.
- c. Seems to enjoy teaching.
- d. Is enthusiastic about the subject.
- e. Seems to have self-confidence.
- f. Varies the speed and tone of his/her voice.
- g. Has a sense of humor.

B. Characteristics of Effective Teachers Most Often Mentioned (Edward Sheffield, *Teaching in the Universities -- No One Way*, 1974)

1. Master of his/her subject, competent.
2. Lectures well prepared, orderly.
3. Subject related to life, practical.
4. Students' questions and opinions encouraged.
5. Enthusiastic about his/her subject.
6. Approachable, friendly, available.
7. Concerned for students' progress, etc.
8. Has a sense of humor, amusing.
9. Warm, kind, sympathetic.
10. Teaching aids used effectively.

C. Characteristics of Great Teachers (Lea Ebro, *Instructional Behavior Patterns of Distinguished University Teachers*, 1977)

1. They get right down to business.
2. They teach at a fast pace.
3. They use a variety of instructional strategies.
4. They stay with their subjects.
5. They use humor.
6. They have command of their classes.
7. They interact with the students.
 - a. Give immediate response to student question or answer.
 - b. Provide corrective feedback.
 - c. Use probing questions.
 - d. Praise correct answers with an observation based on the answer (i.e., an explanation of why the answer was correct).
8. Provide a "warm classroom climate."
 - a. Students free to interrupt at any time.
 - b. Spontaneous introduction of humor.

9. Nonverbal behavior
 - a. Uses gestures frequently.
 - b. Walk around as they talk.
 - c. Extensive use of eye-contact.

D. Characteristics of Effective Large-Class Instructors
(Karron Lewis, et al., from *The Large Class Analysis Project* conducted by CTE).

By combining the comments from both the students and instructors who took part in this study, it was found that the characteristics of an effective large-class instructor are:

1. Enthusiasm about the subject.
2. Knowledge of the subject and the ability to communicate this knowledge.
3. Cares about the progress and welfare of the students.
4. Dares to discipline (govern) to eliminate unnecessary talking, etc.
5. Has a sense of humor.
6. Uses a variety of instructional strategies.
7. Interacts with students during, as well as before and after class.
8. Has confidence in him/herself and what he/she is doing.

E. A Checklist for Good Teaching (Ron Smith, Concordia University, *Teaching and Learning*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Sept. 1980)

1. Good teaching tests pre-requisite skills.
2. Good teaching provides feedback to the teacher.
 - a. Non-credit tests, quizzes
 - b. Discussions with students
 - c. Questionnaires
 - d. Non-verbal messages
 - 1) Drops in attendance
 - 2) Students sleeping
 - 3) Students reading newspaper
3. Good teaching adapts to individual differences.
4. Good teaching provides (specific) feedback to the students.
5. Good teaching is flexible.
6. Good teaching promotes active student learning.
7. Good teaching motivates students.
8. Good teaching is clear and well-organized.

Can you think of other characteristics of effective teachers? List them below: