

every Tuesday with his dying professor. This time the subject is life—not sociology.

### Who Is the Effective Teacher?

When one considers these unique and compelling instructors, the very idea of defining an effective teacher may seem altogether presumptuous. The pedagogues we have enumerated elevated teaching to an art. They were masters—remembered through time for their effect not only on students, but frequently on society as well.

Nevertheless, scholars have tried for over a century to create a schema that would describe and codify effective teachers. One early researcher asked a group of students to identify the characteristics that distinguished the teachers from whom they learned the most from those whom they liked the most. Four characteristics of teachers who were successful at getting the respondents to learn a lot were named by at least 10% of the students questioned:

1. Making greater demands of the students
2. More teaching skill
3. More knowledge of subject matter
4. Better discipline (Kratz, 1896, pp. 413-418)

Although these students spoke from firsthand knowledge regarding the ability of their teachers to get results, their opinions were largely discounted. At the turn of the 20th century, the perfect teacher was thought to be “a good person—a role model who met the community ideal” (Borich, 2000, p. 1). In the minds of most, whether or not students learned depended on the efforts of the students themselves—not the talents of their teachers.

More than 30 years later, however, Barr and Emans (1930) reintroduced a model of teacher effectiveness based on the achievement of students. Again the psychological-characteristics profile of an effective teacher prevailed, and their theory lay dormant for decades. Those who studied teachers looked instead for “artists” among the population of prospective and current teachers or focused solely on their backgrounds and experiences. One of the earliest large-scale studies of teachers’ char-

say to a mourner or a sinner; but the average teacher has no such thorough grasp of his craft, because it is constantly changing and he himself must change with it. (p. 75)

## The Ten Traits of Highly Effective Teachers

Banner and Cannon (1997), in their introduction to *The Elements of Teaching*, describe the difficulty all educators face when attempting to define great teaching: “We think we know great teaching when we encounter it, yet we find it impossible to say precisely what has gone into making it great” (p. 3). The coauthors, both outstanding teachers in their own right, do not, however, let this obstacle deter them from identifying nine specific qualities of character and mind desirable in all teachers. I am no less reticent than Banner and Cannon when I suggest the following 10 traits of highly effective teachers.

### *Personal Traits That Signify Character: What the Effective Teacher Is*

#### *Trait 1: Mission-Driven and Passionate*

The effective teacher is mission-driven, feeling a “call” to teach as well as a passion to help students learn and grow.

*To be a passionate teacher is to be someone in love with a field of knowledge, deeply stirred by issues and ideas that challenge our world, drawn to the dilemmas and potentials of the young people who come into class each day—or captivated by all of these.*

Fried (1995, p. 1)

Lucia Leck is a first-grade teacher in a suburban midwestern town. She is the mother of three grown children, an avid naturalist, and has the patience of a saint. Perhaps that is because her first calling came from God. She confesses that she wasn’t called to teaching—at least not in the beginning. She entered the religious community of Benedictines at St. Scholastica Monastery in Duluth immediately after high school, and there she was told she would be trained as a teacher. “I had no other choice,” she says.

*Knowing who you are and what you are about is like the ground you stand on while you're teaching.*

Lucia Leck

Kathleen Hoedeman eloquently summarizes the texture and complexity of this final trait of highly effective teachers. The suburban Pittsburgh school district in which she is employed places a high value on customer satisfaction and quality interactions with parents. Kathleen's ability to reflect on her teaching and to communicate meaningfully with parents, as well as colleagues, is an essential aspect of total effectiveness.

We teach who we are. Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. Thus, knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. If I am confident in my mastery of the subject, confident in my ability to communicate, confident in the value of the learning I am promoting, I will not fail. The respect I have for myself gives me the freedom to respect my students. The high expectations I place on my own performance gives me permission to expect much from those I teach. Confidence in my own abilities as an educator lets me invite questions and criticism from parents, students, and other professionals and grow from their input.

## Recapping Chapter 1

Chapter 1 has asked and I hope begun to answer the question: Who is the highly effective teacher? You have been introduced to 10 individual traits grouped into three categories:

1. Personal traits that signify character
2. Teaching traits that get results
3. Intellectual traits that demonstrate knowledge, curiosity, and awareness

Figure 1.1 displays the 10 traits in a reproducible graphic organizer. As mentioned in the Preface, you will find numerous graphic organizers throughout the book; a complete set of all them can be found in

## Caring

*The teacher who succeeds in getting herself [himself] loved by the pupils will obtain results which one of a more forbidding temperament finds it impossible to secure.*

Henry James (1902, p. 45)

Maybe “love” made the teacher’s world go round in 1902, but the operative word at the turn of this new century is “caring.”

[Caring] has found its way into the language of every facet of the profession. It is being regarded as the essential ingredient for excellence in instruction, classroom management, classroom and school climate, student motivation, administrative leadership, and parent and community support systems. It pervades the educationese of the nineties. It is the theme to which a multitude of new books on education and teaching, and entire educational journals are devoted. (Agne, 1999, p. 165)

In a study of at-risk students’ perception of teacher effectiveness, 47 young adults, who had either graduated or dropped out of high school, were interviewed regarding the characteristics of their teachers. A researcher asked one young woman what she would change about her school experience so that she could have been more successful as a student. Her answer is compelling. “Actually, having teachers care. I saw a lot of teachers there to be there. To be making money. They really didn’t care. Some teachers did, but some teachers just didn’t care” (Peart & Campbell, 1999, p. 272). Teachers who were identified by students as changing their lives were rarely praised for their knowledge of subject matter, teaching methods, or materials. Those were all givens in their students’ minds. What really mattered to students were the teachers’ human qualities (Coppedge & Shreck, 1988).

Carl Rogers, the eminent psychotherapist, was fascinated with the relationship between what he called the facilitative conditions (e.g., understanding, caring, and genuineness) and learning in the classroom (Rogers, 1957). He hypothesized that students would learn more and behave better if they were taught by high-facilitative teachers (i.e., individuals with high levels of understanding, caring, and genuineness) as com-

#### Trait 4: With-It-Ness

The highly effective teacher demonstrates with-it-ness: the state of being on top of, tuned in to, aware of, and in complete control of three critical facets of classroom life:

1. The management and organization of the classroom
2. The engagement of students
3. The management of time

The novice [as well as the master] teacher must be attentive to everything, even to the most innocent movements on the part of the students: the restlessness of their bodies, a surprised gaze, or a more or less aggressive reaction on the part of this or that student. (Freire, 1998, p. 49)

Jacob Kounin coined the very descriptive term *with-it-ness* (1970, p. 74). The word reminds me of the proverbial eyes in the back of her head that my mother assured us she had. When my brother and I were small, it was not difficult for us to believe that this was indeed true. Although we could not see my mother's second set of eyes, she always seemed to know when we were doing something naughty. It didn't matter that she was in another room. If we stuck out our tongues at each other, she would call from the kitchen in an all-knowing way, "I saw that. Stop it, right now." We would look at each other in awe at her omniscience.

My mother also had another characteristic that Kounin includes in his description of with-it-ness, called "overlappingness." This is the uncanny ability to do seven things at the same time. My mother could talk on the phone, peel potatoes, tie a shoelace, and wipe a dirty face—all without missing a beat. Highly effective teachers are masters of multitasking, just like my mother. They can teach, walk around the classroom, take in everything that's going on, and signal off-task students all without missing a beat. Ineffective teachers, by contrast, can scarcely manage starting a lesson on time. "With-it-ness requires the ability to simultaneously attend to a variety of stimuli and then to appropriately categorize what is observed and quickly respond in a way that will prevent disruption and maintain the flow of the lesson" (Bullough, 1989, p. 47).