10 Characteristics of Great Teachers
as revealed by Educational Research & Dr. Ken Knight

1. Clarity –
   - Precise sentences and words.
     - Sentences - clear, efficient, not muddled - Get to the point.
       - A great Albert Einstein quote: "If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough."
     - Interrupters: "You know, . . ." "er, . . ." "we’ll do that, okay?"
     - Pronouns – reduce usage; watch out for antecedents:
       - He: Method A is a good solution. She: I like Method B. He: I think we should do that. (which?)
       - They said . . . (who said?)
       - This is useful/This procedure is useful. (Inserting noun is stronger - a reminder of the subject.)
       - "it is something you need to do." (vague) My advice: get rid of it.
   - Orderly sequence of content.
     - What need to know 1° to understand next? Structure of subject - hierarchical; sequential; discovery?
   - Voice – do you know what you sound like?
     - Too loud/too soft? Too shrill?
       - Too slow/too fast? Give chance to write notes; give chance to sink in.
     - Listen to yourself speak:
       - Cerebral dif: talk – you are playing notes; listen to yourself talking – you are playing music.

2. Variability –
   - What’s wrong w/this picture? - night class, 6-9pm, undiluted PowerPoint, dimmed room, no questions.
     - How fix? Discussion, group exercises, dyads (S1 explains #1, S2 explains #2).
   - Dr. Knight: Human attention span is 15 minutes – after that, you have to be good.
   - Cross modalities:
       - Lecture=auditory; reading/Powepoint/demo=visual; notetaking/lab=motor (and visual).
     - Everybody learns better when they cross modalities:
       - Rezents - Plant ID: Real plant; inspect, feel, smell, taste, discuss.
     - Some students (learning disabled) learn little under a specified modality:
       - e.g., cannot learn when content is spoken – must read content; vice versa; or, must perform it.
     - Ergo, cover all bases by crossing modalities.

3. Enthusiasm –
   - Why did you choose your major? What grabbed you? What fascinates you about your discipline?
     - Are you teaching this (fascination, love of subject) as well as the content?
   - 2-ways Ss love course: because they find that enthusiasm in themselves; because they see it in you.
     - Dr. Knight talked about so many guys & girls signed up for one Great Teacher’s courses in ABRP.
     - Pyle: Maliko Gulch – siphon brought water to central valley. (All my riders hear story every trip over the gulch.)
     - Dr. Knight: They may forget what you say; but they’ll never forget how you made them feel.

4. Task oriented –
   - Stay on task:
     - Start on time; end on time.
     - Stick to the subject: Personal stories w/o a relevant moral not allowed.
   - Remain professional
     - How to do that? Be prepared for class; be organized; know goals for that class; get Ss to be productive.
     - Good rapport w/ Ss is different from trying to be their buddy.
     - Dr. Knight: We’re not talking about cracking the whip – develop a sense of importance.
5. Let students “in on” what’s expected of them –

- Say in class, “I expect you will be able to…”
  - e.g., if tested on current workshop, note differences in these expectations - I expect you will be able to:
    a) cite 10 traits of Great Teachers; b) explain/weigh each; c) cite your best trait & list one to work on.
  - No more grading on the normal curve. Give away the exam, w/attitude: “Let me help you get there.”
    - Research shows directed learning is superior to indirect learning. (Dr. Larry Frase)
  - This strategy is the rationale behind Assessment – what do you expect students to do?
    - Make sure objectives clear in your mind, and in your students’ mind.

- Your expectation – greatest motivator in your arsenal.
  - When you say ‘I expect you will know XXX’, that conveys I believe you can know XXX.
  - What meaning is conveyed when you ignore a student?
    - Ans: You don’t matter; I don’t think you can make it, e.g., lost Ss in the back of the room.
  - Dr. Grayson (GESA): Expect each student to achieve - make “contact” with each student in every class:
    - How? Eye contact, ask question to, smile at, nod to, move near, put your hand on their desk.
    - After every class, assess: Who did I miss?
    - It’s ok to probe: (U no ask means U no care.)
      - You always come to class late – are you driving a long way?
      - You seem to be struggling – how can I help?
      - If no time? 10 min. reading notes directly after class moves info from short to long term memory.

6. Appropriate praise –

- Must be earned. Must be specific (not: you are a good student).
  - Can’t be indiscriminate. Dr. Knight, “Nothing so unfair as equal treatment of unequals.”
  - Find something positive academically to say to every student.
    - “I know you are finding this class tough; and I appreciate how you never miss class.”
    - Dr. Knight, “Make sure each student experiences success early, and often.”

7. Positive reinforcement –

- Show what’s right.
  - Knight: How feel if homework comes back filled w/red marks? Check what’s correct, not what’s wrong.
  - If good, say why it’s good. (What is right about it? e.g., good phrasing, correct logic, etc.)

8. Criticism

- Do not be critical; but be instructive – show how to make correction.

9. Structuring –

- Dr. Knight: Tell them what you will tell them; tell them; and tell them what you told them.

10. Questioning –

- Research: the more teachers ask questions, the more enthusiasm seen by students.
- Techniques of questioning (3):
  - Reciprocation: Answer a question with a question, e.g., What do you think?
  - Redirect: e.g., who can answer his question?
  - Probing: Move beyond the superficial, what else/more?
- What kinds of questions lead to success? Ans: Those with “yes” answers.

Homework: 1) Read handout by end of day (preferably before return to office).
          2) Email me: what will you want to remember always.