

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 1st 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:
 - Learning Modalities: Auditory, Visual, Kinesthetic/Motor, Tactile.
 - Lecture=auditory; reading/PowerPoint/demo=visual; notetaking/lab=motor (and visual).
 - Everybody learns better when they cross modalities:
 - Rezens - 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.