

# Good Teaching: The Top 10 Requirements

By Richard Leblanc, PhD

**One.** Good teaching is as much about passion as it is about reason. It's about motivating students not only to learn, but teaching them how to learn, and doing so in a manner that is relevant, meaningful and memorable. It's about caring for your craft, having a passion for it and conveying that passion to everyone, but mostly importantly to your students.

**Two.** Good teaching is about substance and treating students as consumers of knowledge. It's about doing your best to keep on top of your field, reading sources, inside and outside of your areas of expertise, and being at the leading edge as often as possible. But knowledge is not confined to scholarly journals. Good teaching is also about bridging the gap between theory and practice. It's about leaving the ivory tower and immersing oneself in the field in talking to, consulting with, and assisting practitioners and liaising with their communities.

**Three.** Good teaching is about listening, questioning, being responsive and remembering that each student and class is different. It's about eliciting responses and developing the oral communication skills of the quiet students. It's about pushing students to excel and at the same time it's about being human, respecting others and being professional at all times.

**Four.** Good teaching is about not always having a fixed agenda and being rigid, but being flexible, fluid, experimenting, and having the confidence to react and adjust to changing circumstances. It's about getting only 10 percent of what you wanted to do in a class done and still feeling good. It's about deviating from the course syllabus or lecture schedule easily when there is more and better learning elsewhere. Good teaching is about the creative balance between being an authoritarian dictator on the one hand and a push-over on the other. Good teachers migrate between these poles at all times depending on the circumstances. They know where they need to be and when.

**Five.** Good teaching is also about style. Should good teaching be entertaining? You bet! Does this mean that it lacks in substance? Not a chance! Effective teaching is not about being locked with both hands glued to a podium or having your eyes fixated on a slide projector while you drone on. Good teachers work the room and every student in it. They realize that they are the conductors and that the class is their orchestra. All students play different instruments and at varying proficiencies. A teacher's job is to develop skills and make these instruments come to life as a coherent whole to make music.

For effective teaching strategies that set the stage for learning in today's college classroom, subscribe to *The Teaching Professor*. Each issue serves up inspiring yet practical articles that will reaffirm your commitment to teaching excellence. [Learn More »](#)

**Six.** And this is very important, good teaching is about humor. It's about being self-deprecating and not taking yourself too seriously. It's often about making innocuous jokes, mostly at your own expense, so that the ice breaks and students learn in a more relaxed atmosphere where you, like them, are human with your own share of faults and shortcomings.

**Seven.** Good teaching is about caring, nurturing and developing minds and talents. It's about devoting time, often invisible, to every student. It's also about the thankless hours of grading, designing or redesigning courses and preparing materials to still further enhance instruction.

**Eight.** Good teaching is supported by strong and visionary leadership, and very tangible institutional support—resources, personnel, and funds. Good teaching is continually reinforced by an overarching vision that transcends the entire organization—from full professors to part-time instructors—and is reflected in what is said, but more importantly by what is done.

**Nine.** Good teaching is about mentoring between senior and junior faculty, teamwork, and being recognized and promoted by one's peers. Effective teaching should also be rewarded and poor teaching needs to be remedied through training and development programs.

**Ten.** At the end of the day, good teaching is about having fun, experiencing pleasure and intrinsic rewards ... like locking eyes with a student in the back row and seeing the synapses and neurons connecting, thoughts being formed, the person becoming better, and a smile cracking across a face as learning all of a sudden happens. It's about the former student who says your course changed her life. It's about another telling you that your course was the best one he's ever taken.

Good teachers practice their craft not for the money or because they have to, but because they truly enjoy it and because they want to. Good teachers couldn't imagine doing anything else.

*Dr. Richard W. Leblanc is an associate professor at York University in Toronto. Contact him at [rleblanc@yorku.ca](mailto:rleblanc@yorku.ca).*

Reprinted from *The Teaching Professor*, vol. 12, no. 6.

\*\*\*\*\*

## The Art and Science of Better Teaching



There's nothing like the start of a new school year to reignite your passion for teaching. But sometimes it's not always easy to keep that fire burning throughout the duration of the semester.

That's why more than 20,000 educators turn to *The Teaching Professor* each month for timely, thought-provoking, and practical articles on a wide range of topics ... from motivating students to incorporating technology into the classroom to establishing a framework for student-centered learning.

**Satisfaction guaranteed.**

[Subscribe now »](#)

---