

a Regular Column on the Issues that Matter Most to Classroom Professionals.

What are the three most important qualities for language teachers?

Recently I asked members of ETJ's online discussion list, "What do you consider to be the three most important qualities or features of a good language teacher?"

Following are some of the responses I received. Thank you to all who participated.

Brett Elliot:

1. Honesty and genuineness. There is no point in lying to students, no point in pretending you are what you aren't or know what you don't know. Fooling students helps no-one.

2. Rapport. Get on with the students, or get on with teaching. One or the other is good, both are ideal.

3. Educate yourself. Learn. Study new ideas, debate old ones. Research the worlds of TEFL and TESOL- it's huge. Find out what works for you and what doesn't; there are many techniques you will never adapt to or agree with, but many that you will. Take time to digest what you learn, but don't take it as "the perfect method" because there's always another way.

Tony Hau:

Be happy. Ultimately this will lead to positive attitudes, smiles and a relaxed atmosphere

Be determined. Being sincere and patient with yourself and colleagues will bring results and will affect the quality and effort of your work,

Be loving. Caring and loving for yourself as well as for the customers (in the teaching profession, customers = students and parents), colleagues, and having trust in the environment you're in, will bring balance. Even if things can often seem loaded against you, these are three basic attributes that a human being can have with nothing to lose but all to gain.

Lawrence Jones:

I think the most important thing for a teacher or any professional (or any person for that matter) is to have a desire to better oneself; not being

complacent or satisfied that one is doing a "good enough" job. Always try to find a better way and be open to different ways of thinking or doing things. In short, follow the boy scout motto, "Do your best!"

Along with that, the cultivation of an ability to analyze situations, people, actions, and ideas is useful for sensing when an approach is not working or needs to be improved, tweaked or changed completely. Another trait is to care for those you teach - to look forward to their growth in the subject matter and as humans in general. I think this includes empathizing with them, trying to get into their world, and taking an interest in them so that you can find the best way to help them grow.

Also, be willing to learn along with your students- to grow with them.

your best. Energy to focus on, accept, and admit what is and isn't working now and why. Also energy to continue to manage fruitful decision making with learners.

Empathy to understand the position of the student, their needs, motivations, wants and dreams, goals and purposes, and the struggle it takes to achieve these.

Enthusiasm for teaching, learning, and an optimistic demeanor, with a skill set to help people realize their potential.

Mike Guest:

1. People skills; Know what to say, when to say and how to say it (comprehensible teacher talk). Know what to listen for, especially listening between the lines.

2. Know your own language; The ability to speak and/or write it doesn't necessarily mean one really knows one's own lan-

Greg Rouault:

How about something like the three E's? Energy, Empathy, and Enthusiasm. Energy to stay current on what, how and why things should or could be done. Energy to prepare, plan and produce



guage and I don't mean only grammar details. One must also be aware of rhetorical structure, social features, interactive features etc.

3. Empathy for the learner; What does the learner need? What is the learner's level? Strong points? Weak points? What methods or tasks will best allow him/her to access or internalize the lan-



guage. Try to put yourself in the learner's shoes.

Marish Mackowiak:

A good teacher is a person who:

1. ...creates the right environment within which students can feel comfortable and be ready to learn.
2. ...understands the appropriate sequence of steps necessary for students to learn or develop language skills effectively.
3. ...is able to select an appropriate strategy and methodology for each group of students, based on knowledge of accepted professional practice and theory.

Terry Yearley:

The qualities of a good language teacher are the same as in games: 1. Skill. 2. A thorough knowledge of the game. 3. A will to win. A good teacher needs a thorough knowledge of the teaching methods and materials available, the students (their abilities, needs, fears, what they respond to etc.), and your own strengths and weaknesses. Add to this, a will to ensure that every student will walk away at the end of the lesson with something they didn't have before. If they learn something, I win.

Beth Isogawa:

My thoughts, in three succinct answers:

- 1- CREATIVITY
- 2- PATIENCE
- 3- DEDICATION

I think I'm OK with patience and dedication but I really need help with the creativity part!!

Steve Cassidy:

Firstly, people skills: Taking an interest in students as unique individuals. Secondly, leadership skills: The ability to motivate, organize and manage groups.

Thirdly, sensitivity to student level: Knowing exactly where they are at. Only then can a tailor-made curriculum be put in place. This last criterion requires at least basic knowledge of EFL theory and methodology.

Emily Homma:

1. (OPTIMISM) A good teacher has a positive attitude towards improving students' weaknesses; he/she points the accusing finger first at him/herself rather than being quick to blame the student's environment and/or attitude towards learning English.

2. (KNOWLEDGE) He/she has an adequate knowledge of content, as well as various methods and techniques in teaching, and employs them in his/her job. He/she keeps updated with the recent trends and news in EFL. Joining ETJ and/or other teaching forums, as well as attending seminars, can really make a big difference.

3. (CONTRIBUTION) He/she has a deep concern towards the attainment of a harmonious teaching-learning environment so that he/she can teach more effectively, and contribute ideas or experiences for others to learn from.

4. (PROFESSIONALISM) He/she observes respect for him/herself as well as others and acts according to the norms set for the teaching profession.

5. (DEDICATION) He/she devotes time, effort and love for teaching. He/she sees the task of an EFL teacher as being similar to other vocations where the reward is not monetary but personal fulfillment!