

# The Top Qualities of a Great Teacher



[Facebook](#) Do a rewind back to your childhood school days. It probably won't take  
[Book](#) long before memories of your best and worst teachers come to mind,  
[Twitter](#) making you either wince or smile. Who did you learn the most from?  
[Email](#) Who did you least respect? Who cared about you? Whose class did you  
[LinkedIn](#) dread going to every day?

The answers to these questions can provide a glimpse into the traits of a good teacher vs the ones who were uninspiring and ineffective. Whether they had a profound positive or negative impact on you, or no impact at all, says volumes about their value as a teacher. Think about how your favorite teachers inspired you to want to learn and do your best. Consider how they made you feel special.

When exploring the qualities of a good teacher, go directly to the source – students. In a [longitudinal study](#) of more than 1,000 undergraduate and graduate education students from the United States, Canada, Bermuda, and the Caribbean, participants were asked to write an essay describing the qualities of the most memorable teachers who encouraged them to teach.

It's not surprising that they rarely mentioned a teacher's exemplary credentials, accolades, or awards as the things that impressed them. Rather, it was several personal and professional characteristics that, when combined, provided a nurturing, engaging, and challenging education and made them want to pursue teaching as a career. Read more about [why you should consider a career in teaching](#).

## What Makes a Good Teacher?

Students in the study consistently identified the following professional qualities of good teachers:

### Prepared

Students can tell if you are winging it or if you have put in the time to thoughtfully prepare for each day. More learning takes place when instructional time is used strategically, is not wasted, and utilizes a variety of learning techniques to engage students.

### Challenging

When expectations are clearly outlined and held to, students are more likely to achieve them. Likewise, when those standards are applied without partiality, students will respect the teacher and be encouraged to do their best, knowing they will be treated fairly. Keep in mind that expectations can be implemented while still allowing for learning variations, personality differences among students, and unique opportunities to succeed.

### Creative

If teaching comes across as a chore or duty, your students will quickly check

out. If, on the other hand, you display a passion for students' learning by developing creative ways to teach, they will engage with the curriculum and get the most out of it. Don't be afraid to mix it up with fun contests, unique uses of technology, or zany antics. To demonstrate mastery of the material, allow students to choose from a variety of assignments, such as art projects, skits, poetry, music, written reports, interviews, or games.

## **Respectful**

How often do teachers seem annoyed or disdainful with regards to their students? A professional teacher will respect all of his or her students, not deliberately embarrass them, speak to them in private about behavior or academic concerns, and be sensitive to their feelings and any personal issues they may be dealing with.

## **Personal Qualities of a Good Teacher**

According to the same study, the following personal traits of a good teacher were rated just as high, if not higher, than professional qualities:

### **Approachable**

Teachers need to command authority, it's true, but if students see teachers only in that light, they will not make a personal connection with either the instructor or the subject matter. Students are most impacted by teachers who are approachable and give personal glimpses into their lives as fellow humans – by teachers who take a personal interest in them, invest in their interests, listen to them, and notice their struggles and joys. Relatable teachers put students at ease about approaching them with a problem, can admit when they've made a mistake, and give students a fresh start every day without holding their past behavior against them.

## **Good-humored**

No one likes those who are stern and serious all the time, who can't take a joke, or who can't laugh at themselves on occasion. The best teachers have a sense of humor, can make learning fun, and know when to lighten things up with a good laugh.

## **Positive**

Teachers who exhibit a consistently optimistic attitude in class have students who perform better. Why? Because those teachers find genuine ways to recognize and praise students, refuse to give up on even the most difficult students, and care about them as individuals. These teachers also make a habit of communicating regularly with students regarding their progress and any challenges, but always manage to do so in a way that uplifts and doesn't tear down, which develops a strong bond of trust between teacher and student.

## **Other Top Traits of a Good Teacher**

### **Good Communicator**

Whether communicating with students, parents, administrators, or other teachers, both verbal and non-verbal communication are key ingredients for getting a message across effectively. Being intentional to address potential problems before they get out of hand; calling a parent to keep them in the loop; checking your body language to ensure it is positive; actively listening to another's concern or needs; striking the right tone when writing a report; or asking for clarification are all elements of good communication that the effective teacher should strive to master.

## Life-long Learner

Students are observant, and they will know if you practice what you preach. Good teachers show students that they are committed to learning best practices, that they're willing to experiment with different teaching techniques, that they aren't afraid of tackling technology, that they and their colleagues share ideas, that they're adaptable to changing educational requirements, and needs, even that they're willing to go back to school for another degree. Students know that the world is constantly changing (and a little scary), so your example of adaptability and continual learning will set a great example for how to tackle it when they get out on their own.

## How to Become a Teacher

Ottawa University makes it easy for you to complete your degree in education with our accelerated, online format. Whether you are just starting your educational journey towards teaching or want to build on a degree you already have, OU offers two undergraduate options, the [Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education](#) and the [Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education \(KS\)](#), as well as several concentrations within our [Master of Arts in Education](#) degree to get you into the classroom.

Keep in mind that each state has its own licensing/certification requirements. While the majority of Ottawa University's coursework for education is offered online, students will need to visit campus for certain portions of the degree and complete in-state student teaching. Students of Ottawa University's education programs will be best served if they reside in the states where the university is located – Arizona, Kansas, and Missouri – as the programs are designed to meet licensure requirements in those states. However, staff will work with students who live in other states on a case-by-case basis.

# What Degrees Do You Need to Be a Teacher?

The degree you will need to become a teacher depends on the grade level and/or subject you desire to teach. If you already have a bachelor's degree in any field, the required degree will be at the master's level. Here are the basics:

## Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education

The [Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education](#) degree is for students seeking certification and/or licensure in Elementary Education (K-5). Ideally, students admitted to this program at Ottawa University's adult locations or online will reside in Arizona, Kansas, or Missouri. The elementary education program is designed to cultivate the top 9 qualities of a good teacher examined above and produce teachers who are proficient in the latest instructional methods. It encompasses methods courses, professional education courses, and field experience. Upon completion of the program, elementary education majors must demonstrate ability in the primary liberal arts areas, including mathematics, science, writing, communication, and the fine arts.

## Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education (KS)

The [Bachelor of Arts in Secondary Education \(KS\)](#) degree is for students seeking certification and/or licensure in Secondary Education (6-12). At the secondary level, students must choose a content area. Options at Ottawa University in Kansas are business, English, history, and math. Through the program, future teachers gain the knowledge, social competencies, and communication skills to be effective in an educational environment. They also learn to design, implement, and evaluate materials and instructional techniques for adolescent learners. Students observe, develop, and practice

skills under the guidance of a classroom teacher in the student's major area of interest.

## **Master of Arts in Education – Elementary Education Unified (KS- leads to licensure)**

The [MAE concentration in Elementary Education Unified \(licensure program\)](#) is designed for students who are preparing for the teaching profession in Elementary Education (K-5) and already have a bachelor's degree in any field. This accelerated, online program leads to state licensure in Kansas through rigorous academic training and field-based experience. The degree is designed to assist in meeting the criteria to become a K-5 classroom teacher or a K-5 special education teacher (low-incident needs).

## **Obtaining Teaching Certification**

Once a student's chosen degree is completed, they must obtain a teaching license to teach in public K-12 schools. To earn a teaching license under the traditional route to certification, candidates must hold a bachelor's degree, complete an approved teacher preparation program, and pass the state's designated standardized tests for educators.

## **Careers in Teaching and Beyond**

Keep on learning! Cultivating these traits can help you become the elementary or secondary teacher that your students look back on as making a profound difference in their lives. Should you want to impact education from outside the classroom, Ottawa University offers several other concentrations within the online Master of Arts in Education programs, including:

- [Curriculum and Instruction](#)
- [Educational Leadership](#)
- [Learning Technologies](#)
- [School Counseling](#)

If you've always dreamed of becoming a teacher, or if you are considering a career transition, [contact an advisor](#) today to enroll in the most affordable and accelerated online teaching degree.