

# Top 5 Qualities of Effective Teachers, According to Teachers

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What do you think are the most important qualities of an effective teacher?

Pearson surveyed educators across US about what they thought made a great teacher. Their survey responses highlight just how important a student-focused approach is for teaching:

## **1. Ability to develop trusting, productive relationships**

The most frequent response is that a great teacher develops relationships

with students. The research literature agrees: teachers need to be able to build trusting relationships with students in order to create a safe, positive and productive learning environment. For example, a teacher in California described it as: "Makes a connection with students." This is something that isn't often emphasized in policy, resources or support given to teachers, but teachers agree it is a very important part of their job.

## **2. Patient, caring, kind**

Patient and caring, which we defined as personality characteristics related to being a compassionate person, particularly with learners, was the second most frequently reported quality. Again, there is research to support that teacher dispositions are strongly related to student learning and development.

## **3. Knowledge of learners**

This is a broad category that incorporates knowledge of the cognitive, social and emotional development of learners. It includes an understanding of how students learn at a given developmental level; how learning in a specific subject area typically progresses like learning progressions or trajectories; awareness that learners have individual needs and abilities; and an understanding that instruction should be tailored to meet each learner's needs.

## **4. Dedication to teaching**

Dedication refers to a love of teaching or passion for the work, which includes commitment to students' success. Responses often referred to loving the subject matter or simply being dedicated to the work. A teacher in Texas told us great teachers are "passionate about the subject they are teaching." Yet, there are documented issues in under-resourced communities that the conditions that motivate dedication in teachers—autonomy, mastery and contribution to a

greater good—are often missing.

## **5. Subject matter knowledge**

This includes expertise in a given content or subject area as well as knowledge of the curriculum, learning objectives and/or standards in that content area. "An effective teacher is deeply knowledgeable of the appropriate content materials," according to a teacher in North Carolina.

If you think about the best teachers you know, it makes sense. Those exceptional teachers develop extremely strong bonds with students, and use them to help students learn.

These findings are especially important as discussions continue around the teacher shortage and how to keep great teachers in the classroom. Too often those who spend time in the classroom are left out of conversations about teacher quality and evaluation. The value of our research is to highlight what educators think makes effective teachers so those qualities can be emphasized more.

Pearson also surveyed students, parents, principals and policymakers in the US, as well as in 22 other countries, about what they thought made a great teacher. The U.S. results align with the global findings. Globally, survey participants did not focus first on how much a teacher knew, or even what kinds of teaching methods he or she used, but instead on the teacher's dispositions and ability to build relationships.

[Explore the findings from Pearson's Global Survey of Educator Effectiveness](#)