

What does it mean to
be an effective
teacher?



What does it mean to be an effective teacher? Introduction There are many factors that contribute to what it means to be an effective teacher. They could be someone who has a deep understanding of what they are teaching and skills to create an ideal environment to encourage positive learning outcomes for students regardless of their background or ability (Victorian Department of Education & Training, 2005). They will have the ability to develop a variety of strategies and practices to support student's learning through planning, implementing and evaluating their lessons and a positive philosophy on pedagogy.

Some other factors that form a successful and effective teacher could include having a professional attitude, a variety of knowledge from a range of areas and exceptional planning and organisational skills. An effective teacher will have the means to successfully manage a classroom, an ongoing commitment to professional development and of course, an ability to relate to children. A philosophy, such as constructivism, reflecting the teacher's ideals and morals and teaching abilities will also provide structure to an effective teacher. Professionalism

A professional teacher encompasses a range of standards such as academic, ethical, legal, personal and cultural (professional standards, is discussed in depth further on) (Whitton, Barker, Nosworthy, Sinclair & Nanlohy, 2010). Academic standards involve attaining formal teaching qualifications and complying with the relevant state teaching authority's requirements on supplementing qualifications with teaching certifications (Whitton et al, 2010). An effective teacher will have attained the relevant qualifications and

looked into their governing body's standards and requirements to be able to teach.

Ethical standards encompass undertaking the right conduct and practice in incorporation with the schools policies and procedures and the teachers own moral ideals and being sensitive to private information and transparent in behaviour (Whitton et al, 2010). Legal standards involve complying with child protection laws and providing relevant documentation clearing the teacher to work with children (Whitton et al, 2010). An effective teacher will provide this documentation upon application in any teaching role.

Legally, teachers are also providing a duty of care to students, protecting them from any reasonable foreseeable harm whenever they are involved in a school based activity (Whitton et al, 2010). Personal standards refer to performing the duties of the role employed for in an honest and integral manner (Whitton et al, 2010). An effective teacher will need to appropriately "dress, act, speak and behave" (Whitton et al, 2010, p. 60). Arriving to school activities in a timely manner will also show a professional attitude (Whitton et al, 2010).

Finally, cultural standards refer to respecting and showing tolerance towards students, parents and fellow staff from different race and religion (Whitton et al, 2010). An effective teacher will encourage community cohesion, recognise and value other cultures and promote tolerance (NSW Department of Education & Training, 2005). A teacher with professional standards and ideals will be effective as an educator, co-worker and community leader.

Teaching philosophy An effective teacher will have developed a philosophy

of teaching that fits within their ideals and provides a positive learning outcome for students.

A teacher will need to decide what type of teaching approach they want to use such as an authoritarian approach which demands student compliance; a permissive approach where the teacher is more of a friend than an authority figure or; an authoritative approach where expectations are explained and self-direction is encouraged (Whitton et al, 2010). Setting goals and objectives in line with what type of teacher they intend to be, interpreting the curriculum and understanding students learning needs and abilities will help provide structure and organisation in the classroom environment.

A productive way to set out these goals, objectives and teaching philosophy could be by creating a teaching portfolio. A teaching portfolio will allow a teacher to list any personal achievements, what they hope to achieve in the teaching profession and how they hope to achieve it and will continue to change over time as different approaches to teaching are developed and evaluation and reflection on teaching practices are planned and implemented (Haugen, 1998; The University of Adelaide, 2005).

Although not mandatory, a teaching philosophy, especially for a graduate teacher, will provide a platform to return to when facing uncertainty, anticipation or fear when teaching for the first time (Beginning Teachers, 2011). A teacher's philosophy will influence how they teach and show that they are committed to their profession and creating a positive learning environment. An effective and common type of teaching philosophy involves a constructivist approach. Constructivism A constructivist approach to

teaching is currently the main type of method used in Australia today (Fetherston, 2007).

Constructivism typically involves students taking whatever they learn in the lesson, interpreting it with the assistance of their own view and memories and constructing an individual variant of the lesson (Fetherston, 2007). In most classrooms, this will happen in a group setting, known as social constructivism but can happen individually which is known as psychological constructivism (Fetherston, 2007). A social constructivism approach relies on language and interaction with others and is more effective if the others have a greater understanding of the task (Fetherston, 2007).

Lev Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist, believed that adults can nurture a child's approach to learning and development through encouraging them to undertake activities using physical and cognitive tools to further their performance and interpretation of the activity (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010). In a classroom, a social constructivist approach will allow children to develop their thinking processes, communication and ability to complete tasks through social interaction then adopt an individual approach to tasks through repetition and personal interpretation (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010).

A psychological constructivist approach is based on a child's physical and social environments effect on their cognitive development (Fetherston, 2007). Jean Piaget, a pioneer in child development, implied that people have four stages of development, each with their own characteristics starting from birth through to adulthood (Fetherston, 2007; McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010). Piaget found that different cognitive processes take place, influencing a

child's interpretation of a task depending on the development stage they are in (Fetherston, 2007).

In a classroom, using this approach would require the teacher to understand the stage of development the child is in and incorporate their abilities whilst in that stage to the presentation of the lesson. Adopting a constructivist approach, whether social or individual, to teaching will allow a teacher to have a range of well researched teaching strategies to incorporate into lessons, creating a positive, nurturing class environment (Fetherston, 2007).

Knowledge & planning

A teacher's knowledge is not just about what they have learnt through study, but their knowledge of curriculum and content, issued by the relevant governing body; knowledge of students, including information gathered before meeting the student and information gathered whilst teaching; knowledge of the school environment, such as school history, policies and procedures; knowledge of the community the school is situated in and; self-knowledge of the teachers own teaching style (Whitton et al, 2010).

By using their knowledge from all these fields, an effective teacher will be able to plan, implement and evaluate a lesson to attain an ideal learning outcome (Whitton et al, 2010). Planning a lesson will involve taking the required knowledge from the areas above and preparing to deliver it to the class (Whitton et al, 2010). Implementing a lesson will involve using the appropriate planned materials and resources to deliver the curriculum content to the students in the allocated timeframe (Whitton et al, 2010).

Evaluation will require the teacher to reflect upon a number of factors including the students understanding of the lesson, the suitability of the lesson content and the teaching strategies used (Whitton et al, 2010). An effective teacher will be organised so students are continually motivated to complete any tasks and participate in the lesson. Motivation

Motivating students to participate in learning will require a positive, effective teaching strategy. Motivation can be described as setting students in the right direction and keeping them on track (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2010). Even though one person is not accountable for the motivation of another, a teacher should make learning attractive by offering incentives and positive reinforcement and encouraging self-motivation (Christophel, 1990).

There are two types of motivation to understand, intrinsic motivation, when the student completes a task for no external reward or extrinsic motivation, where they receive an award or avoid punishment for completing a task (Marsh, 2008). Understanding the types of motivation will help the teacher set achievable learning goals for the students and attaining these goals through extrinsic motivation will encourage students to be more confident and in turn use intrinsic motivation to achieve tasks (Marsh, 2008).

A motivating teacher will have a lasting effect on a student's ability to learn. By understanding that student motivation decreases through the school years, an effective teacher will have strategies in place to engage students and keep them focused (Whitton et al, 2010). Some of the most effective motivational strategies include having a relaxed body position, enthusiasm

and sensitivity, providing verbal encouragement and offering a simple smile (Christophel, 1990; Marsh, 2008).

This will come across as positive to the student who will feel competent and self-efficient. Incorporating motivation into the classroom requires a teacher to have effective management techniques. Classroom management Being an effective teacher means setting in place a classroom management plan that encompasses proactive behaviour management, setting clear expectations and successful lesson planning skills (Queensland College of Teachers, n. d). This will create a positive, safe learning environment that can motivate and encourage students to be involved in their learning experience. Proactive behaviour management will require the teacher to use effective, appropriate responses to misbehaviour that minimise disruption to the rest of the class (Bennett, 1994). A teacher will need to incorporate skills from a number of areas such as knowledge of curriculum and content, understanding of human development and planning skills to create an effective lesson (Whitton et al, 2010).

They will also need to have: access to a variety of resources and materials to assist in presenting the lesson; teaching and learning strategies in place such as what instructional modes will be used to deliver the lesson, how the students will be grouped during the lesson, how much time will be allowed for the lesson, what space will be required to undertake the lesson and how the students will be assessed on their understanding of the lesson; exceptional interpersonal and intrapersonal skills to enhance how the teacher relates to students, co-workers, non-teaching staff and parents and; day to day classroom management and organisation abilities (Whitton et al, <https://assignbuster.com/what-does-it-mean-to-be-an-effective-teacher/>

2010). An effective teacher will allow considerable time to prepare lessons and organise the management of the classroom. To continue to develop on these skills, the teacher will need to reflect on their skills and seek further development to enhance their abilities. Professional development & reflection Lastly, an effective teacher will continue to reflect upon their teaching and seek further development to enhance their pedagogical abilities.

They will understand that being part of a dynamic profession, there is continual advancement in teaching and learning strategies therefore keeping up to date with any new information could improve their pedagogical skills (Victorian Department of Education, 2005). They will identify and understand any areas of development needed by seeking advice and support from co-workers and other experienced teachers, students and parents and from their own personal reflection (NSW Institute of Teachers, 2010). Failing to participate in further development or not feeling the need to update skills and knowledge, will impact on the students learning outcomes and the class environment.

The NSW Institute of Teachers has a policy on continued professional development that lists the mandatory requirements for teachers to participate in authorised further development over 5 year periods (NSW Institute of Teachers, 2008). This could include participating in formal and informal training, conducting research or participating in staff development days (Whitton et al, 2010). The more knowledge a teacher has, the more they will understand their student's learning abilities and how to create a positive learning environment. This will enhance their effectiveness as a

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teacher. Conclusion Being an effective teacher means having the ability to manage the classroom, having an understanding of how to relate to children and having a professional attitude and demeanour.

They should have a wide knowledge base with a commitment to ongoing professional development and a philosophy on how they teach and why. An effective teacher will encourage students to be engaged and motivated to learn and be able to manage the classroom in a positive way that makes children feel safe and comfortable. If a teacher can encompass all these things they will find that they make themselves effective in their profession.

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