

The Center for Teaching and Learning

Teaching Matters

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September's Theme:
Becoming an Effective Teacher:
What does it imply?

By Dr. Chris Stabile

Effective teachers are great at being flexible, which means that they can balance several responsibilities at once and still make students smile and feel appreciated. This I remember, as I tried to fulfill my duties in my classes and being new, I tried to make my classes more interesting, through dressing up in costumes, actively engaging students in re-enactments, and other entertaining activities. These activities always made the students smile and pay attention. Effectiveness emerges as the teacher matures in his or her role and gains more experience with each new class and challenge.

With new teachers, many are trying to figure how to teach and how to be successful. As many teachers become experienced they make improvements from when they first began their career.

Teachers go through phases and the first stage is known as the survival level.

Survival means that the teacher is usually (a) reacting to the class, (b) unorganized, (c) uninteresting, and (d) uninterested in learning new techniques. However, this level is not only based on being new, 20 year veterans can still be at the survival level- to them teaching is just a job. The next level is **mastery**.

This is when those new teachers have figured out how teaching works and really know their material. They are experts in their field and can help students learn. They are more effective than the survival-based teachers. Students like their classes and these master teachers are firm and fair. These teachers make great department chairpersons and other experts, but do they inspire?

The highest level of effectiveness is **inspirational**. To inspire is to teach. These teachers change student lives and leave a positive impression on their students. They do not use discipline but use management and understanding. Students want to learn from these teachers. Think back to when you were in school; did you have any inspirational teachers? These teachers might not even follow the norm of the school, but they are very effective in helping students learn because they continually improve their craft by learning the best and most innovative ways to teach. To these

teachers, teaching is a way of life. When my students come back and visit and tell me that they moved on in their education or that they had obtained a full scholarship because my influence, then I knew that I was effective. When you leave and students are still talking about the topics in other classes or outside the parameters of the classroom or school building, then you can say you were an inspirational teacher.

In short, truly one must be not only effective but inspirational in the classroom. Allow students to think for themselves—do not tell them what to think but show them how.

Ten Ways to Make Your Teaching More Effective

Stephen Tollefson, Office of Educational Development, UC Berkeley, (teaching.berkeley.edu) Reprinted with Permission from the author, August 10, 2005

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

You're not the most important person in the room.

Remember that the members of the audience (your students) are supposed to be the beneficiaries of your communication.

Don't make too many assumptions about your audience. But you do have to make some.

Figure out the basics.

Who are these people?

- demographics (age, ethnicity, gender mix, etc.).

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- predispositions (hopes, fears, positives/negatives, level of interest).
- knowledge of/experience with subject/me.

In what kind of setting will they receive this information?

- large lecture hall or small seminar room or classroom.
- lighting and sound issues.
- time of day.

Take into account the "me, here, now."

- Picture yourself as a member of the audience and ask "How does this message affect me, here, now?"
- Me, here, now translates into what you as a sender have to offer your students/receivers—what they will be able to understand, accept, support, consider important—because it matters to them.

Establish cognitive / behavioral objectives for your audience:

- What do I want my students to *know*?
- What do I want my students to *do*

THE FIRST DAY, OPENINGS, AND CLOSINGS

Don't waste key "windows" of time on housekeeping alone

THE FIRST DAY. Most teachers use the first day to get housekeeping out of the way--office hours,

expectations, administrative details. Instead, summarize most of that need-to-have information on paper and distribute it. Then use the time to:

- **Introduce content**--and relate why it's important to you
- **Clarify your objectives** for students (cognitive and behavioral).
- **Establish tone and expectations**--yours of them, theirs of you.

OPENINGS. Stay away from the predictable (Good morning. On Monday, we talked about . . ., Today, I'd like to move onto . . .). Instead:

- **Begin with a provocative question, anecdote, or current event**--and how it relates to the content.
- **Ask someone in the class to summarize what happened in the last session.**
- **Use a question box**--select the most interesting/difficult questions and address those.
- **Set up a problem**--and promise that they'll have all the tools for a solution by the end of the class.

CLOSINGS. Many teachers simply talk until the end of the class--and say, "See you next time." Instead:

- **Plan a rhythm for your class**--plan to end with content 5 minutes early, so you can summarize, raise questions, preview the next topic.
- **Set aside a time for questions**--and structure that time.
- **Frame/suggest an approach for assigned reading, etc.**--
"As you read the assigned text, please keep in mind these three

key questions we'll be discussing next time. . . ."

PREPARATION

You probably can't cover everything you want to in a lecture.

Decide what is essential, what is important, and what is helpful (what would be nice).

- Cover the first; try to cover the second; forget about the third.
- Release a little control over the material and rely on the textbook or a list of supplementary readings for the nonessentials.

Set objectives.

- What do you want to have accomplished at the end of the lecture?
- What do you want the students to know at the end of the lecture?

Plan a lecture to cover less than the entire period.

- It takes some time to get going.
- Questions always take up more time than you expect.

Divide the lecture into discrete segments and follow the standard speech structure.

- Divide it both in terms of time and in terms of material.
- Try for ten or fifteen minute blocks, each one of a topic.
- Briefly summarize the previous lecture; introduce the topic(s) for the day; present the

material; summarize briefly;
preview any homework and the
next lecture.

**Lecture from notes or an outline,
rather than a complete text.**

- It's too tempting to simply read, rather than lecture, from a complete text.
- Reading also creates a barrier between lecturer and audience.
- Writing up an entire lecture is very time consuming.
- A written lecture often becomes a fossil that never gets updated.

DELIVERY

The "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" Rule. Practice, Practice, Practice.

Be conversational; speak naturally; be yourself (or your best self).

- That self may be formal, "laid back," understated, or hyper. Use those traits; don't fight against them.
- Talk about the material; don't lecture about it. (Talking is easier if you don't read verbatim.)

Vary your pacing and voice.

- Gauge audience reaction, and
- Repeat critical points immediately if you sense the necessity.
- Use your voice to underline and italicize the important points.
- Pause before new points.
- Use transitional statements to move to the next idea.

Use gestures to emphasize points.

- Consider gestures to be a mirror of your voice.
- Adjust your gestures to the size of the room.

Look at the audience.

- Try to cover all parts of the room by dividing it into four quadrants.
- If direct eye contact makes you forget your place, try looking just over a student's head, or between two students (They won't see the difference).

Use language to create pictures.

- Use metaphors, analogies, and similes.

Observe the techniques of others.

- Try out in your own class techniques you admire in others.
- Like any skill, delivery is not innate, but must be learned.

CREDIBILITY & COMMITMENT

You are the most important person in the room.

Although teaching isn't theater, we do know that students find concepts, knowledge, skills, and ideas most accessible and credible from someone they consider . . . well, not dull.

Think about antecedent image--
perception is often stronger than reality.

Credibility is enhanced by:

- Your own sense of comfort and confidence presenting material.
- Your enthusiasm and interest in teaching.
- Your research and own ideas.

Commitment is enhanced by:

- Relating your own experience, ideas, and feelings.
- Taking the first person approach, not separating yourself from your subject.
- Relating your "passion" for your subject.

Delivery is tied to both commitment and credibility:

An old UCLA study of effective presentations analyzed 3 elements (verbal, vocal, visual). Here's what it found was important in establishing credibility/believability:

- Verbal (words you say): 7%.
- Vocal (how you sound when you say them): 38%.
- Visual (how you look when you say them): 55%.

Your energy and intensity will move your audience—and help you (them) reach your objectives.

BUILDING INTERACTION

Learning is not a spectator sport.

Learning takes place best in an active, not a passive environment.

Interaction is a continuous way to

- Assess the *me, here, now*.
- Determine whether or not your content is understood.
- Share the responsibility of learning more equitably and appropriately.

How to build interaction?

- Have questions prepared--begin with relatively easy, accessible ones.
- Set up hypotheticals, problem-solving exercises, brainstorming.
- Work to get everyone involved, even in large classes.

Ask students to consider issues with the person sitting next to them/jot down ideas, questions, concerns. Discuss as a larger group. Assign teams to work together on presenting mini-lectures or case studies. Clearly establish expectations about participation. Establish a question box—and reward team and/or individual with best question of the week or month.

Move yourself!

- Begin class from somewhere besides the front; invite students to consider the issue on board with you, so that you're looking at the board with them. That telegraphs your expectation that learning is a joint experience.
-

CHALKBOARDS (and other high tech media)

If your handwriting is really terrible, perhaps you should go to med school.

Use the board (slides/overheads) to reinforce your points visually.

- Saying it and showing it can often forestall your having to repeat.
- Use visuals to outline your lecture for the class.

If you have a great deal of boardwork,

- Consider having most of it put on the board before class.
- Make a copy of it as a handout.
- Consider using an overhead projector.

Don't talk while you write.

- (Unless you can contort your body so that you're more or less facing the class.)
- Students lose most of your words when they're spoken to the board.
- This holds true for using a pointer. Point, then speak, unless you are already facing the class.

Limit the amount of material you put on a slide or overhead.

- The page you are reading at this moment probably contains more than the maximum you should use.

Have a plan for your boardwork.

- Research has shown that the most prominent part of a chalkboard is the upper left-hand corner, so you might start there.
- Remember that some students might not be able to see material written on the very bottom of the board.

•Remember: all visuals are supplements or complements, not substitutes.

HANDLING QUESTIONS

It's hard to answer a good question-- and even harder to pose one.

Explicitly request and encourage questions.

- Students will see that you have a genuine interest in what they're thinking.

Be aware of how your behavior and comments can set the tone for questioning.

- A negative response (e.g., "We've already covered that") discourages further questions and may make students think you don't really want questions.

Make sure everyone hears the question.

- Repeat it if necessary.
- But don't make a habit of simply repeating every question. It begins to sound like you, rather than the students.

- Ask the class if they heard the question; then ask the student to repeat.

Clarify questions.

- Say, "Do you mean that . . . ," or "I'm sorry, I don't understand the question," rather than "Your question isn't clear."

Answer questions as directly as possible.

- Address your answer to the whole class.
- Ask whether you have answered the question.

Be diplomatic when students raise tangential, overly-complicated questions, or persistently ask questions just to be asking.

- Ask them to stop by after class or see you in office hours.
- If a student is simply confused, say, "Let me go over this point a bit more slowly."

GETTING FEEDBACK

By the time you get end-of-term evaluations, it's too late.

Get regular feedback.

- Ask students to spend the last five minutes of class writing down the most important thing they learned that day or one question they have as a result of the lecture.
- Answer the questions at the beginning of the next class.

Use eye contact as a tool for continuous feedback.

- If you notice students with questioning looks, stop what you're doing and ask if you need to clarify.
- If you get no response, go ahead and clarify.

Conduct a midterm course review.

- Develop your own short questionnaire, or
- Hand out 3x5 cards.
- Be as general or specific as you need to be: "What is going well?" "What is the most important thing you have learned?" "What would you like to see more of?" "Should we spend more time on arachnids?"
- Discuss the results with your class.

Borrow students' classnotes from time to time.

- Alert them on the first day of class that you'll be doing this and why.
- You'll see how well students are understanding.
- Looking at several different students' notes will also tell you whether you are making a particular point clear.
- It can also enable you to see who is having trouble.

Arrange to have your lecture videotaped.

- You can view it yourself or with a consultant who can discuss it with you.
-

TESTS and GRADES

Poor answers are often the result of poor questions, not poor minds.

Decide what your goal in testing is.

- Do you want students to regurgitate material? to synthesize? to be able to go beyond it?

Consider the format of questions.

- In short answer and essay questions, separate out any background material or suggestions from the question itself by double spacing between them.
- Try to ask only one question at a time: not "How did people react to The Origin of Species? Why did they react the way they did? How has that reaction changed over time?" Pick the one that is most important to you (e.g., "How has people's reaction to . . . changed over time?"

Consider the format of the exam as a whole.

- If it gets progressively harder, do the students know that in advance?
- Make the first question one you expect everyone to be able to answer.

Take your own test, give it to your GSIs to take, or show it to a colleague.

- For essay and short answer tests, write out sample answers.

- These samples will give you something against which to compare students' answers
- The samples will allow you to see if your questions are answerable in the allotted time.
- For multiple choice, true/false, and problem set exams, ask your GSIs to take them as a check of their "do-ability."

Make your grading and testing policies clear on the first day of class

Bulletin

The new Center for Teaching and Learning web site is being developed. Take a look at what we're doing:

<http://www.keisercollege.edu/IRPA/ctl.htm>

**Faculty Convocation
October 7, 2005**

More Information about Being an Effective Teacher

Teacher
Effectiveness/Communicator Style

By Robert Reisbeck

Reprinted with Permission from the editor, Laura Hoelscher Ph. D., of *Journal of Extension*, August 11, 2005

"Teacher Effectiveness as a Function of Communicator Style." Robert W. Norton. In *Communication Yearbook I*, Brent D. Reuben, ed. (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books, Rutgers University, 1977), pp. 525-41.

Norton attacks the problem of determining behaviors most associated with teacher effectiveness by working through a communication frame of reference. He says the communication act entails two components: (1) what is said and (2) the way it's said. In this study, he focuses on teacher effectiveness as a function of the way one communicates.

A communicator style consisting of 12 variables was developed. The variables included precise, contentious, relaxed, impression leaving, voice, dominant, dramatic, open, attentive, animated, friendly, and communicator image. Then 65 professors and 596 students at Michigan State University gave their perception of the relationship of the variables to effective teaching.

The communicator style variables that respondents identified as being most related to effective teaching included:

1. *Good communicator image*. Seen as being a good communicator in most situations, and finding it easy to communicate on a one-to-one basis.
2. *Attentive*. Suggesting that the person is empathetic, tolerant, caring, and other-oriented.
3. *Impression leaving*. Centering around the way in which the teacher presents what he/she has selected to present to influence the students to remember the content or the teacher.
4. *Relaxed*. Perceived as being without annoying nervous mannerisms, relaxed, and comfortable.
5. *Not dominant*. Characterized as not being dominant nor coming on too strong.
6. *Precise*. Perceived as eliminating ambiguity in subject matter, and eliminating confusion about work expected.

The research provides strong evidence that perceived teaching effectiveness is related to these six identified communication behaviors of the teacher. Furthermore, teaching effectiveness can be improved by improving specific communication behaviors related to the communicator style variables.

Although this study was done with university students and faculty, communicator style and its relationship to quality of teaching is just as important in adult education or in other areas of informal education.

Faculty Convocation

Keiser Collegiate System

What: Annual Faculty Convocation

When: October 7, 2005

Where: Signature Grand
6900 State Road 84
Davie, FL 33317
954-424-4000

Keiser College, Fort Lauderdale Campus
1500 NW 49th Street
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33309
954-776-4456

Agenda

8:00 AM to 9:45 AM	Continental Breakfast
10:00 AM to 10:30 AM	Greeting from Dr. Keiser
10: 30 AM to 11:00 AM	Discussions on Accreditation
11:00 AM to 11:40 AM	Presentations of Quality Enhancement Plan Topics
11:40 AM to 12:00 PM	Dr. Hochanadel: Keiser Teaching Effectiveness Awards
12:00 PM	Depart Signature Grand and Travel to the Fort Lauderdale Campus
12:30 PM	Lunch: Located in the Foyer of the Fort Lauderdale Campus- Take Lunch to Assigned Departmental Meeting Room
12:30 PM to 3:00 PM	Department Meetings
3:00 PM to 3:10 PM	Ice Cream Break
3:15 PM to 4:30 PM	Continued Department Meetings
4:30 PM	Adjourn

Directions

Please Note

- Appropriate dress is Keiser casual or business casual (no jeans or shorts please).
- All faculties **must** wear their campus name badges.

Directions to:

Signature Grand
6900 State Road 84
Davie, FL 33317
954-424-4000

From Turpike I-95- either North bound or South bound

- Exit to I-595 West
- Exit at University Drive Exit #5 onto SR 84
- Head West on SR 84 until overpass at University Drive (note 2nd map below)
- Make U-Turn under overpass in Turn-around-lane and head East on Sate Road 84
- East on SR 84- Signature Grand will be on the right on the corner of SW 70th Ave and SR 84

Directions to:

Keiser College, Fort Lauderdale Campus
1500 NW 49th Street
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33309
954-776-4456

From Signature Grand

- Exit to SR 84 and make right turn (only make right turn)
- Head East toward I-595 (through light at Davie Road)
- First comes Turnpike

If you take Turnpike- head North

- North to Commercial Boulevard
- Exit and pay \$.75 toll and head East
- East toward Spectrum Business Park
- Make Right onto Spectrum Boulevard
- Follow Spectrum Blvd- until you come across a six-story gray building entitled Keiser College (note 3rd map below)

If you take I-95- continue East on I-595 until I-95 exit

- Take I-95 North
- Exit Commercial Boulevard
- Exit West- left
- Continue about ¼ mile past Powerline Road
- On left, look for Spectrum Business Park
- Make left turn onto Spectrum Boulevard
- Follow Spectrum Blvd-- until you come across a six-story gray building entitled Keiser College (note 3rd map below)