

# What do teachers do that leads to everyday greatness?



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The best teachers recognise and embrace their potential to have a transformative impact on the wider future of the nation, and beyond. By promoting positive values, including tolerance, understanding and inclusion, this sense of moral purpose is the engine that drives the best teachers. It is a privilege to be a teacher, to have the opportunity to impact positively on the lives of so many young people, their families and ultimately their communities. Teachers get to make a difference to the lives of children and young people and improving their life chances and helping them to secure their futures. In this way, teachers have the most important job of all. The greatest of teachers, however, work tirelessly to create a challenging and nurturing environment for their students. Great teaching seems to have less to do with our knowledge and skills than with our attitude towards our students, our subject, and our work. Although, the list below is certainly not all-inclusive, it does narrow down numerous characteristics of great teaching.

*When you next doubt yourself or feel exhausted by the job, just remember, YOU make a difference.*

1. A great teacher respects students. In a great teacher's classroom, each person's ideas and opinions are valued. Students feel safe to express their feelings and learn to respect and listen to others. This teacher creates a welcoming learning environment for all students.
2. A great teacher creates a sense of community and belonging in the classroom. The mutual respect in this teacher's classroom provides a supportive, collaborative environment. In this small community, there are rules to follow and jobs to be done and each student is aware that he or she is an important, integral part of the group. A great teacher lets students know that they can depend not only on her/him, but also on the entire class.
3. A great teacher is warm, accessible, enthusiastic and caring. This person is approachable, not only to students, but to everyone in the school. This is the teacher to whom students know they can go to with any problems or concerns or even to share a funny story. Great teachers possess good listening skills and take time out of their way too-busy schedules for anyone who needs them. If this teacher is having a bad day, no one ever knows—the teacher leaves personal baggage outside the school doors. These great teachers also need wellbeing support too, so make sure you keep and eye on each other.
4. A great teacher sets high expectations for all students. This teacher realises that the expectations set for students greatly affect their achievement; and knows that students generally give to teachers as much or as little as is expected of them.
5. A great teacher has their own love of learning and inspires students with their passion for education and for the course material. Constantly renewing themselves as a professional on a quest to provide students with the highest quality of education possible.

These teachers have no fear of learning new teaching strategies or incorporating new technologies into lessons, and always seem to be the ones who are willing to share what they've learned with colleagues.

6. A great teacher is a skilled leader. Different from administrative leaders, effective teachers focus on shared decision-making and teamwork as well as on community building. This great teacher conveys a sense of leadership to students by providing opportunities for each of them to assume leadership roles.
7. A great teacher can "shift-gears" and is flexible when a lesson isn't working. This teacher assesses teaching throughout the lessons and finds new ways to present material to make sure that every student understands the key concepts.
8. A great teacher collaborates with colleagues on an ongoing basis. Rather than thinking of themselves as weak because they ask for suggestions or help, these teachers view collaboration as a way to learn from a fellow professional. A great teacher uses constructive criticism and advice as an opportunity to grow as an educator.
9. A great teacher maintains professionalism in all areas — from personal appearance to organisational skills and preparedness for each day. Communication skills are exemplary, whether speaking with an administrator, one of the students or a colleague. The respect that the great teacher receives because of their professional manner is obvious to those around them.
10. A great teacher contacts parents with a supportive phone call. Not the phone call to say something has gone wrong or a child has misbehaved, but a call to celebrate achievement, attitude and progression, either academically, emotionally or through showing kindness to others.

11. A great teacher realizes that attending school when they are unwell is not a good idea. As much as we want to be there, make sure the children and young people are safe and secure, spreading your germs is not good for the school. The greatest of teachers will take care of their physical health too in order to protect others from becoming unwell. There are no trophies or medals left in the cabinet for turning up to school sick!
12. A great teacher never stops learning. Every day a learning day.
13. A great teacher also realizes that greatness means having a bad day and that you cannot be 100% brilliant or great all of the time. However, working towards greatness as much as you can is what others will see and value in you. You are not a robot, you are a human being and great human beings have 'off' days too. Knowing when things haven't quite gone to plan is what makes a great teacher a reflective practitioner.
14. Great teachers are collaborators, communicators and creative artists. Sharing your work and skills is as important as putting them into practice. Spread your greatness and in return you will receive thought provoking ideas back from others.

Whilst teaching is a gift that seems to come quite naturally for some, others have to work overtime to achieve great teacher status. Yet the payoff is enormous — for both you and your students. Imagine students thinking of you when they remember that great teacher they had in school or college! ***YOU can change the future with being a great teacher.***

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#### ***Nina Jackson's bio in brief:***

*Few in education have the breathtaking grasp of Nina 'Ninja' Jackson about what makes classrooms, and those in them, tick. Winner of the IPDA International Prize for Education, the TES has described her as an 'inspirational, evangelical preacher of education'. Nina's particular gift is in working with SEN, the Gifted and Talented and engaging disaffected learners. As an international education consultant she has worked with the Ministry of Education, UNESCO and UNICEF in Chile, Ghana, India, China, the Middle East and Europe. In her first book she shared her research on how music improves classroom learning and motivation. Her latest, the bestselling 'Of Teaching, Learning and Sherbet Lemons: A Compendium of Careful Advice for Teachers', has helped thousands of teachers put the 'fizz' back into their classrooms.*

***For more information on this or other Veema consultants please get in touch.***

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