



## Volume 1, Issue #6

“Any teacher that can be replaced with a computer, deserves to be.” – David Thornburg<sup>1</sup>

“For the truth is that I already know as much about my fate as I need to know. The day will come when I will die. So the only matter of consequence before me is what I will do with my allotted time. I can remain on shore, paralyzed with fear, or I can raise my sails and dip and dip and soar in the breeze.” — Richard Bode<sup>2</sup>

### So what is an “Extraordinary Teacher”?

COMO Tom Venezia, Division Chief, Instructor Development

A number of years ago, I was working for an organization, The *International Center for Leadership in Education* (ICLE), that did research and professional development for schools across the country. Two of my colleagues, Drs. Dottie and Custer Quick, a husband and wife team with many years of educational experience proposed a research project to the company. Every year the company would identify the best performing schools in the country. The Drs. Quick proposed a project where they would conduct classroom observations of the best teachers in the best schools in the country. They believed that there were common characteristics of these “extraordinary teachers”. Their research yielded some very interesting results. They identified 10 characteristics of extraordinary teachers. As a result, ICLE published a training kit for schools.

The characteristics identified in the publication have excellent application for all teachers, instructors and presenters. The ten “Characteristics of Extraordinary Teachers” follow. You will note that many of these points are mentioned in other editions of WAYPOINTS—but they are important enough to bear repetition.

- 1- *Student-Teacher Relationships* – “The teacher creates an atmosphere of mutual respect where students and teacher are involved together in the learning process”.<sup>3</sup> This has important

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<sup>1</sup> <http://teachbytes.com/2012/03/01/10-educational-technology-quotes/>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bluewatersailing.com/quotes.php>.

<sup>3</sup> D. Quick & C. Quick; *Characteristics of Extraordinary Teachers*; International Center for Leadership in Education. See also <http://www.leadered.com/pdf/Extraordinary%20Teachers%20Order%20Form.pdf> and <http://www.leadered.com/pdf/Teacher%20Kit%20excerpts.pdf>.

implications for our Auxiliary classes. Setting a positive, welcoming tone helps facilitate open discussion and an effective learning environment. Related to this point, another researcher<sup>4</sup> offered the following comment:

“In one survey of teaching styles in an engineering classroom, students expressed the importance of professors knowing their names. They saw this as a sign of respect for them. They wanted professors to use their names in interacting with them ...

Respect is an important part of relationship building. In an environment of mutual respect, classroom management becomes easier. Students feel important and cared for, leading to greater attentiveness and accountability.”

- 2- *Commitment to Success* – “The teacher believes and acknowledges that all students will succeed and works to accomplish this success.”<sup>5</sup> Students are helped to believe they will be successful, typically are. Conversely, instructors who intimidate students and cause them to feel that the content is impossibly difficult and challenging impede student learning. Some of our course content, particularly in the navigation classes, is objectively difficult, but putting it into ‘bite-sized chunks’ can help. A key is attitude; if you genuinely believe that your students can master the material and communicate this belief, success will come. It may be helpful to have additional instructors available who can work with the students individually.
- 3- *Passion, Enthusiasm & Confidence* – “The teacher demonstrates an infectious interest and passion for the subject matter and relays that attitude to students, staff, and other adults.”<sup>6</sup> Most of our Auxiliary instructors have a strong passion and interest in boats and boating. Share that enthusiasm with your students! Let them know why and what gets you excited about boating and boating safely.
- 4- *Awareness of Time* – “The teacher provides bell-to-bell instruction in the classroom and plans time to ensure that the curriculum is covered within the semester or school year.”<sup>7</sup> It seems that there is never enough time to cover the content in our Auxiliary courses. Careful planning and a keen awareness of time are critical if we are to provide instruction in all of the included content. This means that our ‘sea stories’ and side notes must be kept within a reasonable time frame so that we don’t jeopardize important content.
- 5- *Exceptional Organization* – “The teacher has systems (often self-designed) for maximizing instructional time.”<sup>8</sup> The effective Auxiliary instructor prepares for his/her class and ensures that everything is planned and organized. Props, teaching aids and presentation systems (computers, projectors, etc.) are all checked and ‘ready to go’ prior to the start of class.
- 6- *Seamless Use of Tools and Opportunities* – “The teacher has at hand a full complement of instructional strategies and is able to take advantage of classroom opportunities to extend

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://suite101.com/article/the-characteristics-of-a-great-teacher-a236483>.

<sup>5</sup> D. Quick & C. Quick; *Characteristics of Extraordinary Teachers*; International Center for Leadership in Education. This point is made in many articles on how to be a great teacher, see e.g., <http://www.greatschools.org/improvement/quality-teaching/79-what-makes-a-great-teacher.gs> or <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/philosophy-of-teaching/nine-characteristics-of-a-great-teacher/>.

<sup>6</sup> D. Quick & C. Quick; *Characteristics of Extraordinary Teachers*; International Center for Leadership in Education. See also <http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3755567>.

<sup>7</sup> D. Quick & C. Quick; *Characteristics of Extraordinary Teachers*; International Center for Leadership in Education.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*

discussion and understanding.”<sup>9</sup> Effective instructors not only have the tools to do the job, but have them staged and ready to go without interruption. Nothing breaks the flow of a lesson than to have to stop and rearrange equipment, search for a file or restart the technology. Pre-planning is critical. In addition, don’t be afraid to capitalize on a student’s question and experience in order to clarify or reinforce an important point. This is often referred to as a “teachable moment”. Seize the moment!

- 7- *Highly Verbal – Articulate – Clear Voice* – “The teacher has a widely developed vocabulary, a clear voice, and the ability to explain concepts well.”<sup>10</sup> This is an extremely important issue for all effective instructors. Be sure that your speech is clear and easily heard throughout the room. Also, ensure that you avoid annoying speech patterns like “um”, “ah”, “okay”, etc. A good strategy is to audio or video record one of your own presentations to see if you have developed any of these habits.
- 8- *Sense of Theater* – “The teacher holds the students’ attention through a style that includes a sense of theater, an awareness of audience, and an atmosphere of liveliness.”<sup>11</sup> Another researcher offered the following comment:<sup>12</sup>

“Great teachers understand that they are actors on a stage. Yes, actors. They are performers capable of entertaining, capturing and enrapturing their audiences every day. Their enthusiasm is contagious, and they act as though everything they teach is their favorite thing to teach.”

If we think about our own experiences in school, it was the teacher that was funny, theatrical and engaging that typically caught and kept our attention. They were the classes that we enjoyed going to and typically did well in. As Auxiliary instructors, we need to provide that same lively and fun classroom setting.

- 9- *Experienced* – “The teacher demonstrates maturity gained though several years of teaching.”<sup>13</sup> This is an important characteristic that obviously develops over time. When setting up an Auxiliary course try to assign an instructor to a topic that reflects their strength or assign a mentor or co-teacher to an inexperienced instructor.
- 10- *Pleasantly Neurotic* – “The teacher is likely, on occasion, to bend rules or change procedures in order to benefit students but is at the same time a team player and not a rabble-rouser.”<sup>14</sup> Clearly, our Auxiliary instructors need to be team players. A cohesive team, focused on providing the best instruction will always be successful....being a little neurotic about that never hurts!

Many of our Auxiliary instructors are already “Extraordinary Teachers”, but all teachers recognize the need for continual growth and improvement. What are you planning to do to improve and grow?

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<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>10</sup> ibid

<sup>11</sup> ibid

<sup>12</sup> See <http://smartblogs.com/education/2013/02/15/can-anyone-be-a-great-teacher/>.

<sup>13</sup> D. Quick & C. Quick; *Characteristics of Extraordinary Teachers*; International Center for Leadership in Education.

<sup>14</sup> ibid