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tools like learning management systems, AI-based lesson planning, and digital assessment platforms to enhance instruction and meet students where they are. For example, a middle school science teacher might use AI tools like Curipod to create interactive slides or ChatGPT to generate differentiated quiz questions on-demand. A 2023 survey from Education Week found that 83% of school administrators rate technology proficiency as one of the top three skills they look for when hiring new teachers, reflecting its growing importance in modern education. 13. Humor or Humor, when used appropriately, can transform the classroom into a more relaxed, open, and engaging space. A teacher who incorporates lighthearted analogies or playful comments during lessons can ease student anxiety and make difficult content feel more accessible. For instance, a math teacher jokingly compares solving equations to “untangling headphone cords,” helping students visualize multi-step problem solving. Research from the University of Kansas shows that students in classes where teachers used humor regularly were 25% more likely to report feeling motivated and connected to the subject matter—especially in middle and high school settings. 14. High Expectations Great teachers set the bar high and believe every student can reach it—with the right guidance and encouragement. When educators consistently communicate high expectations, students tend to rise to meet them. For example, an English teacher who expects every student to participate in discussions—while offering sentence starters and scaffolding for reluctant speakers—creates an inclusive and academically rigorous environment. The Education Trust found that students in classrooms with high-expectation cultures made up to two years of academic progress over the same period compared to peers in classrooms with lower expectations, highlighting the power of belief paired with support. 15. Cultural Responsiveness Cultural responsiveness involves recognizing, respecting, and incorporating students’ diverse backgrounds into teaching. This fosters a sense of belonging and helps students see themselves reflected in the curriculum. For example, a high school literature teacher who includes novels by authors of various ethnicities, genders, and lived experiences not only broadens students’ perspectives but also validates their identities. A 2022 report from the National Education Association noted that students in culturally responsive classrooms were 32% more likely to feel connected to school and demonstrated stronger academic performance and social-emotional skills. Desired Classroom Skills Besides the teaching and communication skills you should possess as a good teacher, excellent class management skills are critical. Some of the desired class management skills include: Setting high but achievable expectations for your students- You can do this by teaching them about growth mindsets. They should believe that success is within their control. Reinforces in them daily that they can succeed if they put in the effort. Good planning skills- With good planning skills, you will help students identify their goals and guide them in deciding what their priority is. Teach them how to plan their learning by breaking their tasks into steps to make them more manageable. Teaching learners how to plan will also eliminate uncertainty in the mind, which in most learners results in procrastination. Creating a sense of community- A sense of community will create a social connection and a sense of belonging among your learners. You can establish this community within your students by consistently holding class meetings every morning to focus on building social and emotional skills and establishing relationships among them. Common Weaknesses of Teachers Teachers, even the most experienced, are helpful with some weaknesses. Every teacher would like to see themselves as being perfect, but admitting that we are all flawed in different ways is the first step to becoming better teachers tomorrow. Here are some common weaknesses in teachers: Perfectionism Making mistakes is a normal part of human life. Perfectionism is a fear-based pattern whose short-term rewards are getting the job done and exceeding expectations. Its long-term effects, however, include burnout, compromised quality of work, and missed deadlines. Being afraid to make mistakes primes us for burnout and overwhelms us with fear, factors that distort our functioning as teachers. Dealing with others as a perfectionist is challenging since you will always want them to do things your way, allowing little room for the ideas and imperfections of others. Perfectionism also prevents you from taking constructive criticism from colleagues who may want to share relevant observations on your interaction. Comparison Though no one is perfect, some teachers seem to have it together, and this may be the basis for our comparison. Comparison can hinder your success as a teacher if you are constantly comparing yourself with colleagues you view as perfect. Learning helpful hints and new ideas from teachers with the strengths we would like to possess would help you overcome comparison. For instance, if a colleague is better at relating with learners and they look up to her more for guidance, instead of getting all jealous and bitter at her, seek to know what she does differently to get the students to open up to her. Spontaneous If you are a spontaneous teacher, you act without planning but will rely on previous experience teaching diverse classes and using different approaches to teaching. Spontaneity in learning is not all bad, as it helps adjust the power imbalances in a typical classroom. Spontaneous teaching, however, can have some adverse effects on learning. This can result in a lack of structure to your lesson and poor lesson organization. It may also limit your degree of learner assessment of learner progress and achievement. To avoid the adverse effects of spontaneity, find a balance between flexibility and structure in the lesson. Consider the individual learner’s needs and learning abilities when deciding on the instructional method. Becoming a Good Teacher A chosen path can guide you into becoming a better teacher. Many specialties are available, so knowing what grade you want to teach and what subject area you are passionate about is essential. Here are some steps to take toward becoming a good teacher. Bachelor’s Degree A bachelor’s degree is crucial to becoming a good teacher. Though most states will require a bachelor’s degree in education, alternative routes to licensure are also available. It will allow you to learn essential skills that will help you become a better teacher. Such include: Cognitive skills: A degree program grows your ability to recall, integrate, and analyze information. You will be able to foster critical and creative thinking skills that guide fluency, originality, flexibility, and adaptability in developing and adjusting to learner programs. Communication skills: Acquiring communication skills enables you to interact and collaborate effectively with your learners in delivering and assessing knowledge acquisition. Efficient communication is necessary when also engaging with students’ families and colleagues. Research skills: The skills to initiate and complete data collection concerning learner performance and curricula are essential in effective instruction. A bachelor’s degree program will guide you into effectively demonstrating, considering consequences, information presentation, and record keeping. Social skills: A good teacher is sensitive to ethical and integral processes of establishing functional relationships with all the school community members. The program will develop compassion, empathy, interpersonal skills, and internal motivation, skills you will require to impact your learners and effectively relate with your colleagues positively. Here is a list of some bachelor’s degrees that would guide you into initial certification as a teacher: Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education Bachelor of Special Ed, and Elementary Education Bachelor of Special Education (mild to moderate) Bachelor of Science in Mathematics Education (middle grades) Bachelor of Science in Science Education (Secondary Biological Science) Bachelor of Arts in Music Education Bachelor of Science in STEM Education Master’s Degree Besides attaining a bachelor’s degree, aspiring teachers should also think about acquiring a master’s degree. A master’s degree will upgrade your knowledge and help you learn more about your subject area. You will also acquire more effective ways of curriculum instruction. Teaching Certification To get hired after completing your degree program, getting certified to teach in the state where you are interested in teaching is essential. Getting certified gives you credibility as a teacher and is one of the states’ quality measures for hiring teachers. Most states will therefore require teachers to have certificates to teach. Teachers are crucial in changing lives, inspiring dreams, and pushing individuals to realize their potential. Teachers educate the next generation, promoting positive attitudes that shape society. When you think back on your own education, there’s probably a teacher who stands out as an exceptional source of encouragement and inspiration. Maybe it was a college professor who inspired you to change your career field — or, maybe it was a kindergarten teacher whose simple acts of kindness made a positive difference in your childhood. But no matter what grade you were in or what subject you were studying, chances are your favorite teacher possessed many of the skills and characteristics that are featured on this list, which breaks down the qualities of a good teacher in detail. In This Article: Read on as we explore the top character traits and teaching skills that educators need in 2032 and beyond. We’ve also included an overview of the credentials, degrees, and qualifications that are required to become a teacher, both in California and out of state. Whether it’s a skill you need to brush up on, a credential you need to earn, or maybe even a character trait you want to work on developing, this guide offers dozens of ideas for areas where you can start improving as an educator — and start improving your resume at the same time. Whether they’re teaching advanced calculus or how to count to 10, effective teachers share certain universal traits in common. For example, all great educators have the ability to listen actively — not only to their students, but also to their colleagues, school administrators, and students’ family members. We’ll talk more about active listening and why it matters below, along with several other traits that teachers should try to exemplify. According to Robert Lee, Ed.D., Dean of the Sanford College of Education, “A good teacher possesses qualities such as strong communication skills, empathy, and a passion for lifelong learning. These attributes not only foster a positive and engaging classroom environment but also enhance student success and inspire a love of learning. Good teachers also possess a deep understanding of their subject matter and can take that knowledge and make it culturally relevant for students as they develop engaging lessons. Good teachers inspire and motivate students to reach their full potential while creating an inclusive learning environment where each student is seen, valued, cared for, and respected.” While some are less tangible than others — and potentially, more challenging to cultivate — all of them are equally worthwhile for teachers to actively develop and practice. Read on as we break down more than a dozen of the most important traits for educators, including: Active listening Adaptability Collaboration Creativity Empathy Engagement Focus on growth Lifelong learning Patience Preparedness Respect You don’t need to have a specific personality type to be an inspiring and effective teacher. However, there are some useful traits you should work on developing or strengthening if your goal is to be a more engaging and successful educator. Adaptability is a must for teachers, who need to continuously evaluate what’s working for their students — and even more importantly, what isn’t working. Being adaptable and flexible allows you to flow between different theories of learning and modes of teaching — something we’ll discuss below — and continuously check in with your own judgments and assumptions about others. Even in classrooms of adult learners, there’s still an inherent imbalance of power that exists between students and teachers. It’s imperative for educators to be mindful of this imbalance and ensure that students feel respected and heard for the people they are and what they contribute to the classroom. Creativity goes hand in hand with adaptability — another key trait we explored on this list. Whether you teach first graders or doctoral students, you’ll need the ability to innovate, think outside the box, and find novel solutions to challenges, which will empower you to meet a wide range of students’ needs. Being creative as an educator will also help you to foster creativity in your students — an essential key they’ll need for countless career paths. From parent-teacher conferences and department meetings to teaching dozens or hundreds of students every day, education is an intensely collaborative field by nature, involving a constant interplay between students, teachers, administrators, and family members. If your goal is to become an educator or transition into an educational leadership position, you’ll need strong collaborative skills to ensure you can work well with others consistently. In line with being flexible and adaptable, it’s important to be prepared for a wide range of scenarios and challenges in the classroom. You can increase your overall level of preparedness as an educator by learning about your students’ strengths and challenges, and ensuring that you consider how each of your students could be affected by your lesson plans. In 2006, psychologist Carol Dweck introduced the concept of “growth mindsets” vs. “fixed mindsets” in her book *Mindset: The Psychology of Success*. According to Dweck, individuals with a fixed mindset perceive assets like intelligence as being determined early in life, which can cause obstacles or challenges to seem insurmountable or overwhelming. In contrast to a fixed mindset, individuals who have a growth mindset believe that traits like intelligence and creativity can be developed with practice. Your students will come from different backgrounds, skill sets, and challenges — and you need to be ready to meet them, whichever point they’ve reached in their learning. That means having the ability to accommodate students who learn at different paces, using different styles and methods, within the same classroom or group. This is another area where traits like adaptability, empathy, and patience come into play for educators. Drawing on multiple subjects and disciplines shows students how businesses operate — and how problem-solving works — in the real world, grounding their learning in practical real-life scenarios. If you don’t possess all of these traits already, don’t panic — just be mindful that there may be some areas where you could benefit from a little practice. Whether your goal is to tune up weak skills, refine strong ones, or develop new abilities, a degree or credential program provides the perfect opportunity to acquire the qualifications and experience you need to go further in your chosen career path. Good teaching goes beyond delivering information—it creates a positive, supportive learning environment that shapes students’ experiences and outcomes. When teachers exhibit qualities like empathy, adaptability, and preparedness, they foster a classroom culture that encourages students to engage actively and feel confident in their learning journey. This supportive atmosphere helps students feel seen and understood, which can lead to higher engagement, better grades, and a genuine curiosity for exploring new ideas. Teachers who prioritize growth and respect help students feel valued, reinforcing their sense of self-worth and encouraging them to take on challenges. This not only boosts academic performance but also builds students’ confidence in their abilities, setting the foundation for lifelong learning and success beyond the classroom. Here are just a few of the teaching credentials or degrees that graduate and undergraduate students can pursue at National University. Each option combines rigorous coursework and research with an academic seminar or field experience component, where the student has the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of — and ability to apply — the subject material they’ve covered throughout the program. The Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education at National University is an NCATE-accredited degree program that may be completed online or on-campus. Coursework covers topics such as Early Cognition, Early Language and Literacy; Observing, Assessing, and Planning; Children with Special Needs; Designing Emergent Curriculum; and Nature, Numbers, and Technology. For additional details about the program, explore the BAECE program page or contact our admissions office to request more information. The Master of Arts in Education, or MAE, is an NCATE-accredited program with the option to conveniently complete coursework online. The MAE is designed for students who want to acquire field experience, conduct original research, and build on their undergraduate degree with a rigorous, high-level study of the historical, philosophical, psychological, and social foundations of today’s education industry. Program coursework includes topics such as Early Childhood Education Learning and Development; Foundations of Adult Learners; Community Development in Higher Education; Media Rich Instruction; Identity, Inclusion, and Equity; and Applied Critical Thinking. To learn more about the online or on-campus MAE program at National University, get in touch with our enrollment counselors today. National University offers both Single Subject and Multiple Subject Teaching Credentials, along with a wide variety of additional teaching credentials to help you reach your goals. The credential you need depends on the classes or grade levels you intend to teach and in what state, along with other factors. For example, according to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), you’ll need a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential to become an elementary school teacher, whereas anyone who “want[s] to teach in high school in California must earn a Single Subject Teaching Credential.” Finally, “Individuals who want to teach special education students in California must earn an Education Specialist Instruction Credential,” per CTC guidelines. According to the online education resource Teaching-Certificate, “Although the...California Commission on Teacher Credentialing used to require 150 hours of professional growth to renew a clear credential, clear credentials may now be renewed without verifying any professional or continuing education requirements.” However, that doesn’t mean educators should overlook opportunities for continued learning. While no longer a CTC requirement, continuing education has several benefits, including increasing your knowledge and adaptability needed to employ a variety of teaching modes and methods. 1. Communication — Verbal, nonverbal, and written communication are fundamental for any educator. Not only does clear communication enable you to learn about your students, how they learn, and what challenges o motivates them most — it also empowers you to dialogue with parents and families, share information with your colleagues and administrators more productively, and create a more inclusive environment for students from diverse backgrounds. 2. Time Management —You expect your students to complete their assignments on time — so it’s vital that you model the same skills. Effective time management, which you can read tips about here, will help you ensure that tasks like grading papers, composing quizzes, and meeting with students are completed in a timely fashion that aligns with your curriculum and lesson plan calendar. 3. Strong Work Ethic — Teachers can be expected to carry heavy workloads. It’s essential to possess a strong work ethic to help you manage the demands of the role. 4. Problem Solving — From unexpected technical issues to bullying and conflicts between students, teachers are frequently confronted with unplanned situations that need to be resolved so that learning can continue. You’ll need robust problem-solving skills to ensure that you’re prepared to address a wide range of impediments to learning. 5. Leadership — From the renowned scholar leading a master’s-level course, to the kindergarten teacher leading their class together in a singing exercise, teachers are leaders for their students. You’ll need strong leadership skills to keep your students organized, engaged, and on-task while demonstrating respectful attitudes toward their instructors and peers. 6. Variety of Teaching Methods — Teachers need the ability to employ a variety of teaching methods to meet students’ equally varied needs, ranging from teacher-directed (like lectures and worked examples) to student-directed (like collaborative and project-based learning). For example, it’s important to be familiar with traditional methods of learning vs. inquiry-based learning. You can learn more about teaching methods and how to implement them in our guide to theories of learning. 7. Variety of Teaching Modes — Educators should be familiar with — and develop teaching strategies that are adapted to — the various VARK “modalities of learning,” an acronym that refers to “Visual, Aural, Read/write, and Kinesthetic” modes of learning. You can read more about VARK modalities here. 8. Emotional Intelligence — Emotional intelligence is a broad term that describes a person’s ability to understand, analyze, and manage their own emotional responses. Emotional intelligence is critical for teachers, who need to maintain professionalism and demonstrate leadership even when placed under high-pressure, high-stress situations. Examples of important hard skills for teachers to develop and hone include computer skills and technological competence, classroom management skills, administrative skills, writing and grammar skills, and thorough knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Educators also need to obtain the appropriate certificates, credentials, degrees, and additional qualifications, which we’ll discuss briefly below. 1. Computer and Technology Skills — Computers and other technology play increasing roles in education, a topic we explored in our article on educational technology. Technological proficiency is vital for teachers in any subject, especially if you plan on teaching online or media-rich courses. 2. Classroom Management — Conveying information is only part of your job as an educator. You’re also responsible for managing your classroom and student behavior, particularly for educators who teach younger children. Classroom management skills are essential for maintaining an inclusive, safe, and welcoming environment that supports learning for all of your students. 3. Administrative Skills — Administrative skills include skills such as strategic thinking, strong organization, and time management, and the ability to lead effectively while communicating clearly. These types of skills are useful for both school administrators and educators, with several (like time management) receiving their own places on this list! 4. Writing and Grammar Skills — It isn’t just English or creative writing teachers who need a firm grasp of grammar and spelling. You’ll need strong writing skills for routine tasks like emailing parents and administrators, correcting students’ assignments, sharing demonstrations on the board, and possibly even requesting grants or other funding. 5. Certificates and Credentials — In addition to earning your degree, you’ll also need to earn certain certificates and credentials depending on factors like where and what you’d like to teach. For example, to quote the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), “Individuals who want to teach in high school in California must earn a Single Subject Teaching Credential.” For more detailed information on that subject, we recommend exploring our overview of multiple and single subject teacher education credentials available at National University. 6. Qualifications and Degrees — Most teaching positions require a minimum of a bachelor’s degree, with certain types of teaching positions or academic employers requiring a master’s or even doctoral degree. National University offers a range of accredited online and on-campus degree programs in education to help prepare you for a career in teaching or school administration, like preparing you for professional exam requirements. Learn more about the process of becoming a teacher, or explore the state’s requirements for becoming a teacher in California. 7. Curricular Knowledge — It’s essential to have extensive and in-depth knowledge of your curriculum so that you can lead meaningful discussions and help your students connect larger ideas together. For example, you’ll need to be fluent in any foreign language that you intend to teach. These are just a few of the many examples of good teacher qualities and skills to possess — no matter what subject you teach or at what grade level. Discover more about what it takes to become an educator by applying to a credential or degree program at National University today. Teaching begins with asking questions and learning. Do both at the same time by earning your teaching degree or credential from National University. Through the Sanford College of Education, we offer a wide range of teacher credentials, associate’s degree programs, bachelor’s degree programs, and master’s degree programs — all with regional accreditation, financial aid options and resources for students, and the ability to complete coursework partially or 100% online. Follow your passion while making an impact on young (or not-so-young) minds. Talk to our admissions counselors about applying to National University and enrolling in our BAECE, MAE, or other teaching credentials and degree programs.

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