

Aiming for Inspiring Teaching

“Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.”

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Overview

This article aims to present...

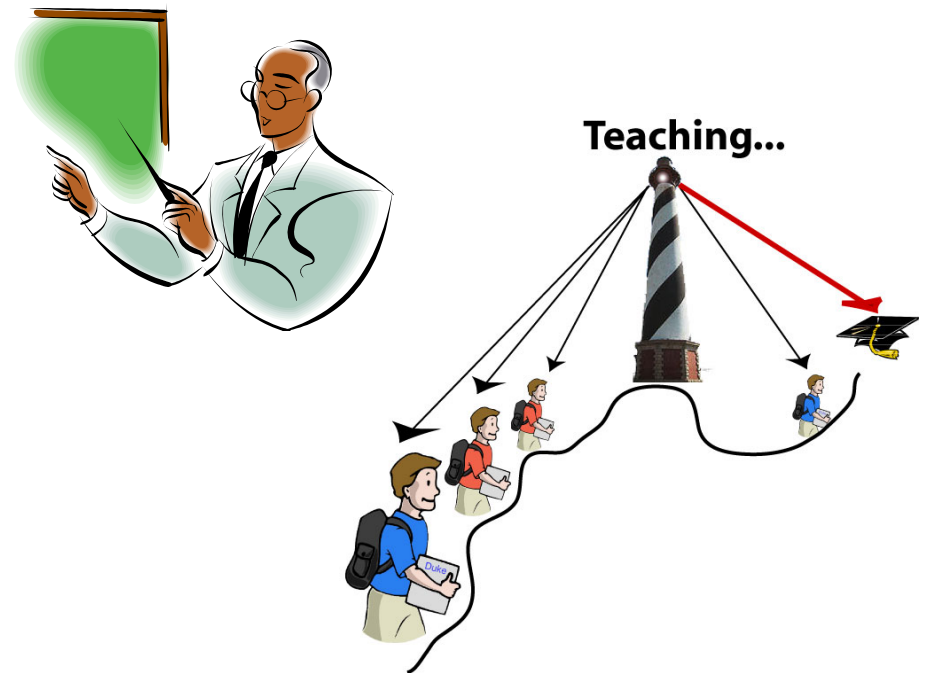
- A definition of inspiring teaching:
 - Your definition
 - One belief...
- The possible developmental stages of an inspiring teacher:
 - Stage 1- Unaware
 - Stage 2- Aware
 - Stage 3- Capable
 - Stage 4- Inspired
- Three qualities that could be considered essential for inspiring teaching:
 - Self-awareness
 - Open mindset
 - The act of communication
- Teaching strategies to enhance inspiring teaching repertoire:
 - For disengaged students
 - For dispelling stereotypes
- A possible recipe for inspiring teaching:
 - Sample teaching recipe



What is Your Definition of Inspiring Teaching ?

Before continuing reading this document, please take a minute to think about your own definition of inspiring teaching.

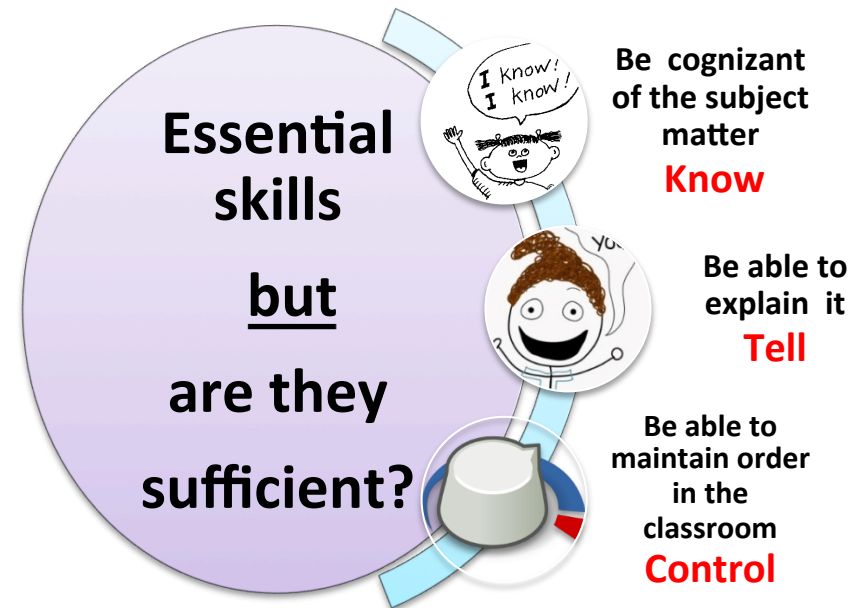
Write or sketch your definition of inspiring teaching and note down two qualities you associate with an inspiring teacher.



One Belief ...

One belief is that inspiring teachers are those who **Know** their subject matter, can capably **explain/tell** it to their students, and have **control** of their students' behavior (Steele, 2011). In other words, the assumption is that, in a classroom setting, if the students are quietly sitting and listening to the teacher then learning must be taking place.

There is no doubt that **Know, Tell,** and **Control** are essential teaching skills, however, is this really the totality of the inspiring teacher?



Inspiring Teaching is ...



Stimulating

When students go beyond class requirements – on their own to seek opportunities to improve – their performance.



Motivating

When students are working hard – not because they will be rewarded with a grade or sticker, but for the sake of learning – for self-satisfaction.



Exciting

When students are eager to pass on what they learned to their friends, siblings, parents, community, and/or the world.



Captivating

When students came back for more information, or skip a break to come talk about their interest.



Effective

When students demonstrate understanding that education will impact their life and maybe the lives of people close to them.

Inspiring teaching is when students became passionate independent learners

Developmental Stages to Inspiring Teacher

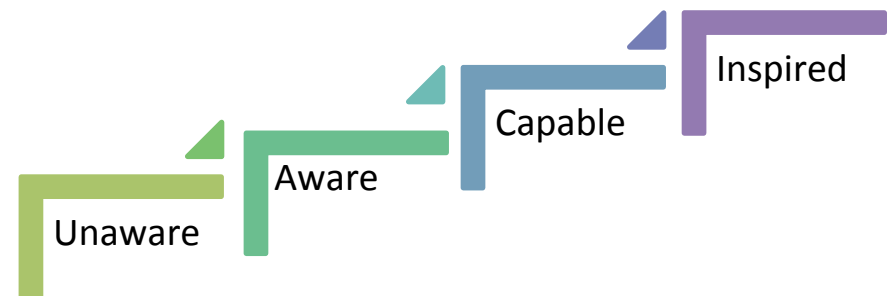
Carol Frederick Steele (2011) describes the journey of becoming an inspiring teacher in four stages:

- The **unaware** stage
- The **aware** stage
- The **capable** stage and
- The **inspired** stage

These stages are on a continuum and a teacher might show signs of one or more stages at any time depending on the circumstances at the moment.

Being aware of the developmental stages of reaching the inspired stage of teaching, helps teachers understand the process and challenges of teaching. Thus, they can seek specific guidance and support from more advanced teachers. Moreover, it may help to maintain teachers' motivation for teaching.

Four Stages:



These four stages are further discussed in the next few pages.

Stage 1: Unaware

Steele (2011) describes the **unaware** stage as the point of where teachers might not be fully aware of the multifaceted nuances of teaching. Moreover, they might lack important information about the subject matter and/or pedagogical methods.

This stage is likely to be present in the pre-service teacher at the beginning of their teacher education program.

Teachers' can benefit from:

- Observing and talking with teachers who are at the capable and inspired stage.
- Becoming familiar with content knowledge and educational theories.



Unaware of the multifaceted nuances of teaching



Lack important information

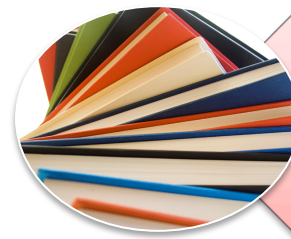
Stage 2: Aware

At the **aware** stage teachers are familiar with common learning theories and teaching strategies. They might still lack the ability, confidence or self-efficacy to actually combine the theories and methods effectively into their teaching.

In the midst of the overwhelming process of trying to make connections between theories and techniques, they might miss some of learners' needs. They might lack the ability to "think on their feet" yet, they are capable of reflecting back on their lessons and finding solutions or alternatives to make it more effective (Steele, 2011) .

Teachers' can benefit from:

- Re-teaching lessons after reflecting and making necessary adjustments to the lesson plans.
- Receiving feedback from other teachers who are at the capable or inspired stage.



Know theories & techniques



Not yet able to implement or combine the two

Stage 3: Capable

At the **capable** stage, teachers have obtained subject matter and pedagogical knowledge. They might still look unsure of their approaches and maybe uncomfortable with some of their strategies. At times, they might be afraid to deviate from their planned lesson and consequently might fail to recognize “teachable moments.” Moreover, they might not always read students’ reactions and non-verbal messages.

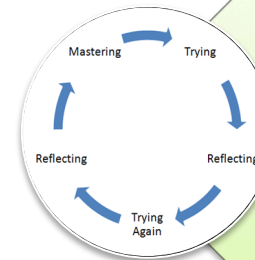
The key element at this stage, however, is the teacher’s ability to effectively engage in the reflective cycle. This continuous cycle of trying – reflecting – trying again – reflecting helps carry teachers from the **capable** stage to the **Inspired** stage (Steele, 2011).

Teachers’ could benefit from:

- Re-teaching lessons after adjustments.
- Observed by and given feedback from other teachers who are at the capable or inspired stage.
- Being videotaped and then self-reflect on their performance.



First attempts might look uncomfortable and unsure



A cycle of: Trying – Reflecting – Trying again – Reflecting ... until Mastering

Stage 4: Inspired

At the **Inspired** stage teachers have already identified many techniques, strategies and effective methods of teaching. Inspired teaching, however, needs more than just tested techniques and strategies (Steele, 2011). Inspiring teaching requires that teachers get to know the students well or have “with-it-ness” (Graham, 2008).

With-it-ness is an acquired skill that caring teachers gain as they study each student’s demeanor. With-it-ness is achieved when teachers know who would be off-task even when they are not looking. Or, this quality may be reflected when a teacher knows what would motivate Johnny to run the extra mile.

At the inspiring stage, teachers know that *one-size-does-not-fit-all* and that each student needs individual care (Tomlinson, 1999).



Mastery of many techniques, strategies, and methods along with *With-it-ness*



Have a sense of which strategy is effective at any given moment for any given learner

Three Qualities of Inspiring Teaching

Three qualities that might be considered pivotal for inspiring teaching:

- Teacher's self-awareness
- Teacher's open mindset
- Teacher's understanding of the act of communication

The above three qualities, along with some suggestions for developing such qualities, are further discussed in the following three pages.



Teacher's Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is one of – if not *the* – most essential realization process that teachers must engage in. Research (Constantinou, 2015; Keengwe, 2010; Ladson-Billings 1994; Liggett 2008; Maye & Day 2012) reveals that teachers' values, morals, beliefs, fears, prejudices and philosophies impact their teaching.

Having a solid understanding of one's own identity helps teachers understand, respect, and appreciate their students' identities.

Developing self-awareness :

- Engage in a self-reflective practices.
- Examine and re-examine one's own values, morals, beliefs and prejudices – honestly.
- Acknowledge and address one's own bias.



Teacher's Open Mindset



All students have the potential to learn given enough time and appropriate instruction (Christenbury, 2011, Morehead, 2012). Students are individuals – not identical products of mass production. They tend to excel in different areas. Students' achievements in physical education, art, music, and other areas that are not considered academic subjects, however, are undervalued and at times even ignored.

Having an open mindset opens the door to celebrating individual achievements in all areas which would boost students' confidence and motivation. All students ought to experience the feeling of self-pride.

Developing an open mindset:

- Become aware of students unique talents and abilities.
- Be aware of difficulties and challenges of accomplishments beyond your subject area.
- Value and respect students' passions and interests.
- Have the attitude of "no accomplishment is a small accomplishment".

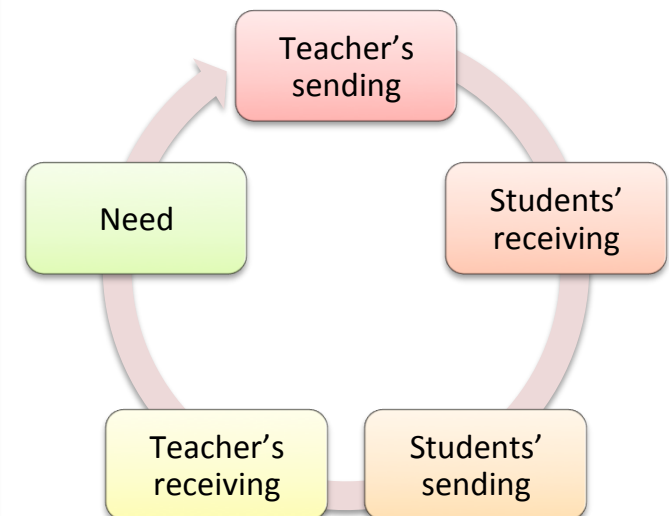
The act of Communication

Teaching is an act of communication in which a cycle of exchanging messages takes place. For example, a teacher sends messages when delivering a lesson to students while students send back messages to the teacher. A student's message can be expressed either formally, such as asking a question for clarification, or informally in the form of a yawn, or looking out the window. These informal messages could get missed, ignored, or misinterpreted, which might break down the communication cycle.

Inspiring teachers are extremely good at receiving both formal and informal messages and knowing how to respond to students sending these messages. This is one of the capabilities that probably sets inspiring teachers apart from **capable** teachers (Steele, 2011).

Developing the act of communication:

- Pay attention to the students' behavior and reactions to the lesson.
- Solicit students' feedback on a regular basis.
- Expect students to be active participants not passive recipients.



Teaching Strategies for an Inspiring Teaching Repertoire

be willing to **share** and take risks alongside with students.

recognize and seize on **“teachable moments”**

weave connections between teachers, students, and subject matter

“read” the **reactions** of diverse learners

explore the neighborhood, **interact with the community**

study the needs of all students and invest time to **get to know individuals**

Reflect on the practices

Strategies for Disengaged Students

- Convey high expectations for all students and provide opportunities to experience success.
- Help students engage in meaningful learning tasks in an interactive and collaborative learning environment.
- Discover students' interests and use that as a basis for interaction and development of a positive relationship.
- Encourage parents, guardians and community members to be part of students' education.
- Believe in students' potential and guide them to reach it.
- Provide various ways of assessing students' learning and guide them through constant feedback to success.

(Tomlinson, 1999, 2011)



Strategies for Dispelling Stereotypes

- Identify and address stereotypes.
- Select texts or supplementary materials to point out sexist language, racial or gender stereotypes.
- Be committed to achieving equity for all students.
- Provide academically challenging lessons that include higher-level cognitive skills for both genders.
- Get to know students' needs, and strengths while providing opportunities for students to get to know each other as real people to break down stereotypical perceptions.
- Share concerns, hopes, and expectations with students.
- Teach students to listen, share, manage conflict and take responsibility for their actions and behaviors towards others.

(Weis & Fine, 2001)



Is there a Recipe for Inspiring Teaching ?

Teaching is not a mathematical equation or a chemical reaction producing consistent results if the same protocol is repeated. Teaching is a multifaceted task with ever-changing variables that need to be taken into consideration at any given moment of the teaching process. A teaching method that worked with one class might not work with another – even if the students belong to the same age group and ability level (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Knapp, Shields, & Turnbull, 1993; Winfield & Manning, 1992).

Student individualism makes the teaching environment an ever-changing dynamic challenge. These factors make it difficult to define a solid or fixed recipe for teaching. Yet most teachers probably have a recipe – at least for the major ingredients – most likely built on their values, morals and beliefs. The rest of the ingredients – usually adjusted in real time – are based on the direct and indirect messages that students communicate to the teacher along with the teacher's own reflection.



Here is a Sample Teaching Recipe....

- 1 ½ cups of **positive relationship** with students
- 1 ½ cups of **listening & paying attention** - to students' voices & reactions
- 1 cup of **enthusiasm** for the subject matter and **zeal for learning**
- 2/3 cup of willingness to be **candid and open - minded** with students
- 1/2 cup of **authentic caring**
- 2 TBS **approachability & flexibility**



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