

The 5 Essentials of a Good Teacher

The famous Vergara vs. California case, [which held](#) “that several key job protections for teachers are so harmful to students that they deprive children of their constitutional right to an education,” is back in court. Unhappy with the original decision, the teachers unions brought their case to the appellate court yesterday, hoping to gain back some of their former job security.

Regardless of your opinion on Vergara, the case brings up a very prominent education issue: what makes a good teacher?

The response to that question can be politically charged these days, so in order to extract ourselves from politics, a look to the past might be helpful. In his 1850 book, [American Education, Its Principles and Elements](#), journalist and author Edward Mansfield laid out a simple checklist of five essentials for a good teacher:

1. He is Knowledgeable

A good teacher, notes Mansfield, not only knows the subject which he teaches, but he also excels in general knowledge, particularly history. Knowledge of the latter is necessary because of the framework it lays for other subjects.

2. He has Good Character

Mansfield insists that good personal behavior and capable classroom management (i.e. discipline) are necessary to make a good teacher.

3. He is a Good Communicator

Instead of engaging primarily in academic-speak, a good teacher is one who “has a capacity to state clear thoughts in clear language, without one word more or less than is necessary.” Teachers who do so will place thoughts in the

minds of their students which can be easily remembered and used in later years.

4. He is a Good Citizen

While somewhat surprising, Mansfield believes a love for one's country is an essential teaching trait. This is because teachers train the next generation of leaders, and a teacher who loves his country will instill in students a respectful and appropriate response to the foundations upon which America is built.

5. He Loves His Job

There is a great uproar today over the fact that teachers leave the profession after a few years. But in all likelihood, Mansfield would encourage some of them to do so, for without a love for the job a teacher is unlikely to succeed. Teachers who do succeed are those who understand the great influence and opportunities they have in guiding young minds to maturity.

Given the increasingly bureaucratic nature of education, do you think it's difficult for teachers to obtain and cultivate these five essentials today?