

Teaching effectively is an art form.

It is a dramatic production complete with actors, scripts, antagonists, protagonists, major dramatic questions, and the climax that resolves and answers all of these questions.

It requires real intelligence – social, emotional, physical, intellectual, and, sometimes, even existential – to succeed.

And it doesn't happen automatically, although I am convinced that almost anyone can learn to become a good teacher

if they are willing to pay and enjoy the price to rise above the mediocrity that sometimes exists in the teaching world.

We know from both research and observation that effective teachers are all as different in their personality types and teaching styles as the snowflakes that fall from the sky, but we have also learned that good teachers share some common skills and some common teaching paradigms.

Good teachers care about their students; they are aware of their students' lives both inside and outside of the classroom setting; they are very socially, emotionally, and intellectually skilled; they listen; they discuss; they validate; they promote interaction; they ask good questions; they apply what they are teaching to their students' lives; they teach with clarity; they are knowledgeable and skilled at preparation and delivery of their discipline-specific teaching content; they provide a secure environment that invites their students to reflect, think for themselves, change, and gain new skills within the context of active learning. It has been my overriding goal throughout my career to learn, practice, and master these teaching principles and to use them effectively in the classroom. After twenty-five years of working with students, I am even more convinced that the classroom is the stage on which some of the most important dramatic and life-changing learning occurs.