

## **To Teach or Not To Teach Students**

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Some people become teachers with an emphasis on teaching courses, sharing information. Others join the profession to teach students. Is there a difference between teaching courses and teaching students? There is, without a doubt, a definite difference. Let us examine some differences, because our choice will impact our students' educational experience in a marked way.



Teachers who teach courses tend to be more concerned about completing the course content, the subject matter, within a stated period of time. Their goal is to finish teaching the curriculum. Teachers who teach students tend to be more concerned that the students understand and grasp the concepts being taught.

Teachers who teach courses tend to be more concerned about having the students demonstrate knowledge of the subject and obtain high marks on tests and quizzes. Teachers who teach students tend to be more concerned about the application students make of the course content they are being taught.

Teachers who teach courses tend to be more concerned about the quality of students that are in their classroom—they prefer to have all the A students because having B and C students may mean a slower teaching pace or having to re-teach material. Teachers who teach students tend to be more concerned about every student in the class mastering the material being taught and will go to any length to implement strategies to achieve this goal.

Teachers who teach courses tend to be more concerned about programming than their relationship with the students. Teachers who teach students tend to be more concerned about their relationship with the students and student-to-student relationships. Building a good rapport with students is more important to them, because they know it to be a fact that students tend to learn better from teachers with whom they have a good rapport than from those with whom they do not.

Teachers who teach courses often adopt an attitude of: “I teach it, you’d better get it.” Teachers who teach students often display an attitude that says: “I will help you to get it—regardless of what it takes.”

Teachers who teach courses tend to demonstrate less compassion and accommodation for students. Teachers who teach students tend to show more compassion and are more willing to accommodate students' needs.

No doubt, the preferred goal of every successful teacher should be to teach students rather than to focus primarily on teaching the course content. It is self-evident, however, that neither of these approaches should necessarily override the other. In other words,

“These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone.” The wise and prudent teacher will combine both approaches in order to have a win-win situation.

Joyce and Weil (1986) state: “When we teach well, we help students learn well” (p.iii). I believe that it is the goal of every teacher to teach students well. Joyce and Weil (1986) go on to state: “Educational environments are designed to increase the probability that certain kinds of learning will take place and that their effects will be durable” (p. vi). This is transformational teaching; certainly those who focus on teaching students will increase the probability of transformation in the academic, social, emotional, physical, and hopefully, the spiritual lives of those students.

**Resources:**

- Joyce, B. and Weil, M (1986). *Models of Teaching* (3rd. ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ:Prentice-Hall, Inc.