

Attributes of highly successful teachers of children in poverty.

1. They tend to be nonjudgmental. As they interact with children and adults in school settings, their first thought is not to decide the goodness or badness of things, but to understand events in terms of why the children and others do what they do.
2. They are not moralistic. They know that preaching and lecturing is not teaching and does not impact behavior.
3. They respond as professionals and are not easily shocked. Horrific events occur in urban schools with some regularity. They ask themselves, "What can I do about this?" If they think they can do something, they do; otherwise they get on with their work and their lives. They respond to emotionally charged situations as thoughtful professionals.
4. They hear what children and adults say to them. They listen and understand. They have exceedingly sensitive communication skills. They regard listening to everyone in the school community as a potential source of useful information.
5. They recognize and compensate for their weakness. They are aware of their own biases and prejudices and strive to overcome them.
6. They do not see themselves as saviors. They have not come to rescue the system, actually, they do not expect the system to change much, except to possibly get worse. Their focus is on making their students successful regardless of the system.
7. They are not isolates. They know that burn out can affect everyone. They network and create their own support groups.
8. They view themselves as successful professionals rescuing students. STARS see themselves as "winning" even though they know that their total influence on their students is likely to be less than the total society, the neighborhood, or the gang. They take pride in turning youngsters onto learning and making them educationally successful in the midst of failed urban school systems.
9. They derive energy and well-being from their interactions with children. They enjoy being with children so much that they are willing to put up with even the irrational demands of the system. Rather than always feeling exhausted, there are many days when they feel vitalized and energized from a day at work.
10. They see themselves as teachers of children as well as content. They want their impact on their students to demonstrate that increased learning has made them more humane, better people, not just higher achievers.
11. They are learners. They are models of learning for the children because they are vitally interested in some subject matter or avocation that keeps them constantly learning. They share their love of learning by modelling.
12. They have no need for power. STARS derive great satisfaction from being effective with diverse children in poverty. They are not motivated by any need for power over children, other teachers, or parents.
13. They see the need for diverse children in poverty to succeed in school as a matter of life and death for the students and the survival of society.