Every teacher seeks to be an effective teacher. Every teacher wants to have a positive, remarkable, and lasting influence on students’ lives.

But what makes for an effective teacher? What role does teacher preparation play in teacher effectiveness? What do effective teachers do during planning, instruction, and assessment? How do they create a learning environment that engages and supports students? And how do effective teachers interact with their students to promote the best opportunities and results for all?

In Qualities of Effective Teachers, 3rd edition, James H. Stronge explores these questions and more as he synthesizes the literature on teacher effectiveness. The result? A research-based framework for effective teaching that addresses:

- Professional knowledge
- Instructional planning
- Instructional delivery
- Assessment
- Learning environment
- Professionalism

Stronge also examines characteristics of effective teachers of at-risk students and high-ability students. To bridge the gap between research and practice, he includes checklists of skills and positive qualities associated with effective teacher performance as well as red flags that indicate that teachers may not be reaching their full potential in the classroom.

This resource is for anyone interested in improving teaching. It offers research-based advice for teachers who wish to improve their own performance, as well as guidance for teacher leaders and supervisors, school administrators and department heads, staff development specialists, teacher and administrator educators, human resource specialists, and education policymakers and their staffs. Anyone who has a vested interest in students and their success can gain valuable insight and practical tools to ensure positive outcomes for all students.
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How We Came to Know What We Know About Effective Teachers

Since the breakthrough of behavioral learning theory in psychology in the 1950s and 1960s, research on teaching practice has made momentous advances and evolved drastically. We know more about teaching and learning than we ever have before. However, confounded by factors of variety in research design and rigor, and because human subjects are difficult to study to begin with, education research has led to inconsistent and sometimes confusing findings. How can we make the best out of the extant research, and what information can be gleaned?

*Qualities of Effective Teachers*, 3rd edition, sheds light on the elusive concept of teacher effectiveness by summarizing research results accumulated across several decades to define specific teacher behaviors that contribute to student achievement and other measures of effectiveness. The book was developed by focusing specifically on the teacher and his or her preparation, personality, and practice, as opposed to student demographics, school and district administration, or organizational decision making outside the teacher's control. The sources considered in creating this synthesis of teacher background and behaviors include broad-based studies of teacher practice as linked to student achievement, case studies of teachers identified as effective within specific contexts, surveys and interviews among stakeholders, meta-analyses of teacher effectiveness studies, and other reviews of research.
Organization of the Book

Qualities of Effective Teachers, 3rd edition, is designed to serve as a resource and reference tool for educators. It identifies elements of effective teaching within broad categories and aims to cover all areas of teacher effectiveness as represented in the empirical research literature. The book is grounded in a broad review of extant research that explores teacher impact and teacher attributes that have been found to be associated with effectiveness. The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 focuses on the research useful in developing a profile of what an effective teacher is, and Part 2 contains myriad resources related to effective teachers.

Part 1, which begins with Chapter 1, lays out some preliminary issues and the broader contexts regarding teacher effectiveness. Specifically, it defines what an effective teacher is and it looks at teacher effectiveness from the perspectives of the at-risk learner, the high-ability learner, and 21st century teaching. Chapters 2–7 address major categories of teacher effectiveness, with each chapter exploring the characteristics of effective teachers of at-risk students and high-ability students, as well as additional thoughts from the perspective of 21st century teaching.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 7 explore the teacher as a professional and as an individual. Chapter 2 investigates prerequisites of effective teaching, focusing on the influence of a teacher’s professional knowledge. The implications of verbal ability, educational preparation, teacher certification, and experience are also explored. Chapter 7 explores the significance of the teacher’s professionalism. This discussion emphasizes dedicated and reflective practice among effective teachers. The chapter also focuses on a teacher’s nonacademic interactions with students and on the aspects of a teacher’s behavior that make him or her loved, respected, and remembered by students as personally effective.

Chapters 3 through 6 focus more specifically on aspects of a teacher’s job responsibilities and practices. Chapter 3 investigates planning and organization for instruction with a focus on maximizing the amount of time allocated for instruction, identifying learning intentions and objectives, and incorporating assessment data into instructional planning. Chapter 4 focuses on implementation of instruction with an emphasis on
communication and complexity of instructional content by using appropriate questioning techniques and supporting active learning. Chapter 5 considers the management and organizational skills that an effective teacher displays, with emphasis on the establishment of an effective learning environment in which routines and discipline are established and maintained to serve as a backdrop for instruction and student engagement. Chapter 6 examines assessing student progress and potential through discussing the importance of assessment literacy and applying data of student learning outcomes, as well as responding to and meeting the individual needs of special populations within the classroom.

Within each chapter, information is organized into categories of characteristics or behaviors that are supported by the existing research as important aspects of teacher effectiveness. Summaries of research are provided in each chapter, with a list of key references to guide the interested reader to further information on the topics. Chapter 8 presents a brief conclusion on what an effective teacher is in every school every day.

Part 2 includes teacher skills assessment checklists and positive qualities and red flags associated with effective teacher performance. This portion of the book focuses on helping teachers improve—whether the impetus for improvement is self-diagnosed or the result of supervisor assistance. In particular, the checklists and list of qualities are designed to aid in converting research findings into more effective practice. The checklists have been updated to include selected salient qualities of teachers based on the latest educational effectiveness research and understandings of learning and teaching. The qualities are an addendum to the already existing qualities of teachers in general.

**Intended Audiences for the Book**

This book is designed to bridge the gap between research and practice. It has teased out the minutiae and fuzziness of education research and focuses on the big ideas of effectiveness so as to aid readers in identifying the links between classroom processes and desirable student outcomes. *Qualities of Effective Teachers*, 3rd edition, aimed at improving the quality of teacher performance and learning opportunities for students, can be a valuable resource for:
• Teachers who wish to improve their own performance through analysis and reflective practice
• Teacher leaders and supervisors who are engaged in mentoring, peer coaching, and collaborative schoolwide improvement
• School administrators and department heads who supervise and evaluate teachers
• Staff development specialists who plan and deliver training focused on improving instruction for the range of abilities that exist in classrooms
• Teacher and administrator educators who can employ the book's research synthesis in their teacher training and instructional leadership programs
• Human resource specialists who are responsible for recruiting and selecting high-quality teacher applicants
• Policymakers and their staffs who are responsible for developing tools and strategies for state or district teacher development and evaluation processes

Each group contributes to the education of students and has a vested interest in their success.
Qualities of Effective Teachers: An Introduction

The focus of *Qualities of Effective Teachers*, 3rd edition, is the teacher. Not teacher skills alone. Not teacher dispositions alone. Instead, the focus is on the whole person who brings to the classroom unique beliefs, values, attitudes, aspirations, motivation, knowledge, and skills, all rolled into one—the teacher.

The content is presented within the context of a person—the teacher—as opposed to viewing teaching skills as isolated processes. The style and format are designed to be as teacher- and leader-friendly as possible, providing easy-to-use summaries and tools for teacher effectiveness. In building on the framework provided in the 1st and 2nd editions of *Qualities of Effective Teachers*, this edition is solidly research based with updates from the latest empirical findings. Additionally, new features in this edition include a focus in each chapter on the unique qualities needed to prepare students for the knowledge economy of the 21st century.

If finding or becoming an effective teacher were simple, this book would not be necessary. If a single method for developing an effective teacher existed, such a teacher would be in every classroom. Nonetheless, there are common attributes that characterize our best, most effective teachers.

Teachers have a powerful, long-lasting influence on their students. They directly affect how students learn, what they learn, how much they learn, and the ways in which they interact with one another and the world around them. Considering the degree of the teacher’s influence, it
is important to understand what teachers should do to promote positive results in the lives of students—with regard to school achievement, positive attitudes toward school, interest in learning, and other desirable outcomes. This understanding should be based both on what experts and stakeholders think teachers should do and on what educational research has shown to be significant in the preparation and practice of effective teachers.

This edition chronicles the common background and identifies the common behaviors that characterize effectiveness in the classroom. Although the majority of what we know about effective teachers in general applies to teachers of at-risk students and students who are identified as gifted in some way, additional teacher qualities, dispositions, and behaviors emerged in a careful review of the extant literature. Based on a comprehensive review and synthesis of research related to effective teaching, this book serves as a resource for teachers, administrators, and others interested in improving the quality of teaching and learning in our schools.

What Is Effectiveness?

Effectiveness is an elusive concept when we consider the complex task of teaching. Some researchers define teacher effectiveness in terms of student achievement. Others focus on high performance ratings from supervisors. Still others rely on comments from students, administrators, and other interested stakeholders. In fact, in addition to being uncertain how to define effectiveness, we vacillate on just how to refer to successful teachers. Cruickshank and Haefele (2001) noted that good teachers, at various times, have been called ideal, analytical, dutiful, competent, expert, reflective, satisfying, diversity-responsive, and respected.

As a teacher’s influence is far reaching, it is challenging to define what outcomes might demonstrate effectiveness and how those outcomes should be measured. In addition, many variables outside the teacher’s control affect each of the potential measures of effectiveness.

Despite the complexities surrounding the issue of measuring teacher effectiveness, we can agree that effective teachers make an extraordinary and lasting impact on their students’ lives. For instance, research finds that students taught by highly effective teachers are more likely to attend college, live in better neighborhoods, and save more for retirement. If we
replace a teacher who is in the bottom 5th percentile of effectiveness with an average teacher, the lifetime income of the class’s students can increase by approximately $250,000 (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014).

In recent years, the field of education has moved toward a stronger focus on accountability and on careful analysis of variables affecting educational outcomes. Particularly during the past decade, value-added models have been employed in an attempt to determine teachers’ contribution to student learning outcomes, as measured by standardized tests. Time and again, the teacher has proven to be the most influential school-related force in student achievement. Consequently, researchers have begun to focus on the specific characteristics and teaching processes employed by the most effective teachers in an attempt to understand what teachers do to impact student learning.

The growing body of research concerned with teacher effectiveness has reinforced the notion that specific characteristics and behaviors matter in teaching, in terms of student achievement as well as other desirable outcomes (e.g., Muijs et al., 2014). Looking across studies that examine the defining elements of effectiveness, a careful exploration of the research helps confirm which practices are vital. In a 2014 study, Loeb, Soland, and Fox asked, “Is a good teacher a good teacher for all?” and found that teachers who are effective with English learners also tend to be effective with their non–English learner counterparts, and vice versa. It seems that effective teachers are effective with many populations and in various situations. The following chapters will highlight qualities and characteristics of effective teachers from many perspectives, including professional knowledge, instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment, learning environment, and professionalism. Put all these pieces together, and a portrait of an effective teacher takes shape.

**At-Risk and High-Ability Students**

In addition to considering effective teaching in general, are there specific attributes and dimensions for effectively teaching at-risk students and high-ability students? Although these two categories are discussed separately, many students fall into both—that is, they are both at risk and high ability (Cline & Schwartz, 1999; Kaul, Johnsen, Witte, & Saxon, 2015;
Students with high abilities can also be at risk of school failure. Likewise, students at risk of school failure can also possess exceptional abilities. Teachers of these particular students, like teachers of all students, must take into account the unique needs and characteristics of their students (VanTassel-Baska & Hubbard, 2016).

**Effective Teachers of At-Risk Students**

The term *at risk* may have been used in education circles for many decades, but it emerged more broadly in the public arena in 1983 as a result of *A Nation at Risk*, the report published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). In general, we think of students as being “at risk” when they require remediation, are more likely to be retained, are at higher risk of dropping out of school, have low self-efficacy, or have substandard academic skills. These students present pressing instructional and behavioral problems for teachers but are in most need of quality instruction to be successful learners and rise above their situation (Sagor & Cox, 2013).

Often, students labeled “at risk” are disproportionately ethnic minorities or those with low socioeconomic status. These students, who most need quality instruction, face educational disparities because of their skin color, ethnicity, or linguistic and social status. The past 50 years have witnessed significant successes in equalizing access to opportunity; however, an achievement gap persists, one that begins as early as kindergarten and first grade, when achievement in science can be seen to vary by race and ethnicity (Curran & Kellogg, 2016). The effects of the gap are reflected in the fact that the United States has the lowest level of intergenerational social mobility among OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) or other developed countries (Chetty, 2014; Corak, 2013). As a result, a student’s socioeconomic background strongly influences his or her academic achievement and earnings later in life (Welner & Carter, 2013).

Economic inequality now exceeds racial inequality in its impact on educational outcomes, although the effects of both remain significant. This shift became evident in the early part of the 21st century, and it affects teachers today (Reardon, 2011, 2013). Research shows that a reading achievement gap between those from high-income families and those from low-income families has grown significantly since the mid-1970s.
As a result of this shift, studies indicate that Americans are more concerned about, and more supportive of, policy initiatives to close wealth-based achievement gaps than black-white or Hispanic-white gaps (Reardon, 2013; Valant & Newark, 2016). The good news is that by closing one gap, we also often close the other gap.

The great equalizers. Traditionally, schools have been considered to be the great equalizers. And since teachers have the greatest in-school impact on student success, investing in improving the teaching force and equitably distributing this resource can help to successfully address opportunity gaps. For instance, if all black students were assigned to highly effective teachers four years in a row, this would be sufficient to close the average black-white achievement gap (Haycock & Crawford, 2008).

Many factors lead to a student’s being considered at risk. Factors include personal, familial, societal, and in-school factors. Societal and familial factors include poverty, discrimination, parenting education, student mobility, television watching, and amount of reading in the home (Sanders & Jordan, 2012; Welner & Carter, 2013). Five million public school students in the United States (1 out of every 10) are learning to speak English (Sanchez, 2017). English language learners face the challenge of learning subject content while working on their language proficiency. Compared to native English speakers, they are more likely to come from a high-poverty background, they tend have lower academic achievement and lower high school graduation rates, and they are less likely to take college entrance exams, such as the ACT or SAT, and go to college. Students who have learning disabilities or mental health issues such as anxiety or depression are also at higher risk of academic failure, especially when quality, intensive, individualized instruction is not available. We know that selected school characteristics also can affect a child’s education and the risk of a student’s dropping out of school, repeating a grade, or needing some type of remediation. These school-related factors include elements such as the following:

- A less rigorous curriculum in which instruction is watered down and access to the more rigorous curriculum is limited
- A school climate in which students feel that teachers and staff do not expect them to succeed or a climate in which students do not feel safe
Segregation of students in which high concentrations of minority and poor students go to school in buildings in disrepair (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012; Sorhagen, 2013)

And, perhaps most germane to the discussion presented in this book, a key factor is a teacher who is less experienced, less prepared, and less qualified to teach. In fact, “a salient characteristic of at-risk schools is that they generally have relatively few well-qualified teachers” (National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools, 2005, p. 6).

Beacons of bright light. Although the picture drawn here is quite bleak, by no means does it suggest that at-risk students never have effective, dedicated, and well-qualified teachers. In many schools facing the societal and school characteristics described earlier, beacons of bright light do shine in the form of teachers who help students achieve academically and who tap into children’s curiosity and motivation to learn. These beacons of light persist under difficult circumstances, providing stability for students for whom school may be the most stable part of their lives.

Further discussion and exploration. Given the importance of addressing the unique learning needs of at-risk students, sections in Chapters 2–7 focus on teachers of students who, through societal or school factors, are at risk of school failure. As mentioned earlier, although the majority of the literature regarding effective teaching applies in general to teachers of at-risk students, some aspects warrant further discussion and exploration. In fact, current research reveals various characteristics of effective teachers of at-risk students that distinguish them from ineffective teachers.

Effective Teachers of High-Ability Students

Simply defining a high-ability learner is a challenging task, one on which the field of education is not in full agreement. High-ability students are referred to, variously, as gifted, talented, creative, independent thinkers, complex thinkers, leaders, emotionally intense, and curious. This certainly is not an exhaustive list, but it demonstrates that there may not be one definition of “giftedness” upon which most educators, researchers, parents, and students can agree (Baska, 1989; Reis & Small, 2001; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2000). Hence, we use the term high-ability to connote both identified gifted students as well as those high-achieving students who
have not been formally identified as gifted. High-ability students generally have been characterized as having—and exhibiting—a high degree of one or more of the following qualities:

- General intellectual ability
- Specific academic aptitude
- Creative or productive thinking
- Leadership ability
- Visual or performing arts ability
- Psychomotor ability

In addition to these qualities, other types of giftedness or intelligence have been explored, including theories such as Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which is built on the premise that students may not be just mathematically or verbally talented but also may be talented athletically, musically, and interpersonally, to name a few of the multiple intelligences that Gardner (1983) identified. Regardless, students with high abilities in some area need access to a teacher who recognizes the students' unique abilities and works with these students in enhancing their talents in a multitude of ways. In 1968, Joseph Renzulli, a leader in the field of gifted education, observed astutely that the teacher is the most important element in the success of programs for gifted students. And, most certainly, we know this claim holds true today.

**Students' growth and self-efficacy.** A study of university honors freshmen revealed that effective teachers encourage students' growth and self-efficacy, as they make the content meaningful and challenging for their students, and as they shape students' perception of support in their environment by building positive relationships and being knowledgeable about the content. These effective teachers of gifted students have extensive depth and breadth of content knowledge. They are comfortable differentiating content, straying from the familiar territory of the textbook, and delving into a variety of instructional strategies, such as in-depth discussions, with their students (Siegle, Rubenstein, & Mitchell, 2014).

**The influence of teachers.** Unfortunately, access to highly effective teachers in programs that serve high-ability students is inconsistent at best. Students, parents, teachers, and various researchers report that school experiences for gifted learners frequently do not provide sufficient
challenge to promote learning (Little, 2012). Research also highlights the curvilinear relationship between boredom and ability, with students at the highest and lowest levels of ability most at risk for experiencing boredom (Little, 2012). A study of 100 eminent persons reveals that, as students, these individuals could not identify a teacher who influenced them or whom they perceived played a role in their educational development. Secondary school, in particular, brought negative memories (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993). A study of women majoring in mathematics or engineering at the college level revealed that the majority who dropped out of such programs did so because of poor teachers (Brainard & Carlin, 2001). This inconsistency leads to some students excelling and reaching their potential while some drop out of school or fail to develop their talents. In other words, teachers—for better or worse—are extraordinarily influential at all schooling levels.

The role of the teacher is critical. As with all students, the role of the teacher of gifted or high-ability students is a critical one. Research regarding what works and what doesn’t with the general student population does not fully address some of the important elements of effective teaching in the gifted classroom, or in the mixed-ability classroom, where differentiation of instruction is used to meet the range of needs. As for teachers of at-risk students, Chapters 2–7 contain a section devoted to defining qualities of effective teachers of high-ability students.

Effective Teachers in the 21st Century

To remain current with the changes happening in other sectors, education and teaching need to continue to evolve. The shift to a knowledge economy, worldwide in many respects, has brought unparalleled attention to the quality of education systems and, in particular, to teacher quality. Within this continuing shift to a 21st century knowledge economy, a primary factor shaping the workers of the new economy is education quality. Indeed, we must understand that the nations with the best schools, and the schools with the best teachers and leaders, will own the future.

A highly interrelated and competitive world demands that young people be truly college and career ready. Consequently, particularly within
the past decade or two, numerous and substantial changes have taken place in the educational realm. Consider just a few of these meta-changes:

- Unprecedented attention has been paid to teacher performance and accountability due to a significant body of research identifying the teacher as the most important in-school factor impacting student success.
- Conceptions are changing regarding how people learn and what they need to know in order to compete in the knowledge economy.
- Changing contexts of an increasingly diverse student population are calling for growing equality.

The consequences of these and similar changes shine a bright spotlight on effective teachers. Teachers must prepare all students to meet world-class standards, diminish achievement gaps and social inequality, and serve as the linchpin for educational reforms (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). All of these factors, along with many others, place a renewed premium on our populating every classroom with the best teachers possible. Given the importance of a future-oriented perspective, Chapters 2–7 also contain sections on effective teacher qualities needed in the 21st century.

**Framework for Effective Teaching**

The chapters that follow capture the major job responsibilities or duties performed by teachers. They aim to provide a comprehensive and authentic “performance portrait” of effective teachers. Each chapter presents teachers’ skills and behaviors that have a direct impact on student learning outcomes as indicated by a synthesis of extant research. In fact, the Framework for Effective Teaching used throughout this book (see Figure 1.1) is a valid operational definition of teacher effectiveness, according to a study of teachers and administrators (Williams, 2010). The study also finds that school administrators and teachers perceive that all important facets of teacher effectiveness are included in the framework. Further results show that demographic factors play a minimal role in influencing teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions. In other words, the framework presented in this book produces highly consistent agreement among both teachers and administrators regarding the significance and worth of all the identified dimensions of teacher effectiveness.
Summary

Teaching is complicated because it is both an art and a science (Marzano, 2007, 2017). As an artist often creates works of art that are spontaneous and improvised, effective teachers, too, must continually be spontaneous and improvise in the classroom. Although teaching can be exhilarating, it carries a degree of risk as the teacher and student work together to create the art of learning. In terms of the science of teaching, the research findings and recommended practices identified throughout this book are not meant to prescribe what to do, but instead to serve as tools that teachers and school leaders can use as they create the most positive learning experiences possible for their students.

The practices highlighted throughout this book will seem like old friends to many teachers. For these effective teachers, the chapters should serve as a review and a reminder for continued improvement. For others, the same findings serve to build awareness as they take steps to enhance their effectiveness. By focusing on teacher effectiveness, our ultimate goal is to improve the educational experiences and achievement of the students we serve in our schools.
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Dr. Stronge's research interests include policy and practice related to teacher quality and effectiveness, teacher and administrator evaluation, and teacher selection. He has worked with numerous state departments of education, school districts, and national and international educational organizations to design and implement evaluation and hiring systems for teachers, administrators, and support personnel. Recently, he completed work on new teacher and principal evaluation systems for American international schools in conjunction with the Association of American Schools in South America and supported by the U.S. Department of State. Stronge has made more than 350 presentations at regional, national, and international conferences, and conducted workshops for educational organizations extensively throughout the United States and internationally. Among his current research projects are (1) international comparative studies of national award-winning teachers in the United States and China, and (2) influences of economic and societal trends on student academic performance in countries globally. His most recent book, What Makes a World-Class School and How We Can Get There, was published in 2017 by ASCD.

Dr. Stronge has authored, coauthored, or edited 30 books and more than 200 articles, chapters, and technical reports. He was a founding member of the board of directors for the Consortium for Research on Educational Assessment and Teaching Effectiveness. He was selected as the 2012 national recipient of the Millman Award from CREATE in recognition of his work in the field of teacher and administrator evaluation.