

An Overture

What is an Outstanding Biology Teacher?

There outstanding biology teacher brings to teaching:

- A dedication to people;
- An active interest in their total development; and
- A commitment to helping them discover their full potential, develop their self-confidence, and realize their inherent capacities.

Such a teacher begins his or her career with this kind of dedication and retains the same deep commitment day after day and year after year through many different experiences. Furthermore, such a teacher has the ability to respond constructively to new experiences—an ability that distinguishes the teacher with twenty years' experience from the teacher with one year's experience repeated twenty times.

The constructive responses of outstanding teachers range from the simplest acts to more complex behaviors; all responses reflect a certain set of values. By simple acts good teachers demonstrate their dedication to people—making eye contact with students, laying aside papers to give a student full attention, writing personal notes on papers to be returned, even recognizing students with a smile or a wave of the hand. Outstanding teachers are constantly sensitive to each student's interests and concerns and recognize achievements however small. Such teachers accept students as they are and use every opportunity to help them develop their potential.

Outstanding teachers value respect and responsibility. They and their students have a strong mutual respect for one another. They become slow to judge, quicker to show a kind sense of humor, excited about broadening horizons, and eager to revise work to make it better. Outstanding teachers are responsible individuals and value responsibility in their students. They understand that, though one has much freedom to choose different courses of action, the consequences of those actions are fixed. Such teachers strive to help students understand the consequences of their actions and to accept responsibility for those actions.

Biology teachers have some unique opportunities to demonstrate the qualities of an outstanding teacher.

- They can share their respect for life with their students and help the students to appreciate living things in their great diversity.
- They can help students develop a broad range of abilities by teaching them the skills of inquiry—skills that help one to understand not only living systems but also other areas of learning.
- Finally, they can use interrelationships among living things to help students clarify moral and social values regarding life and living things.

Great are the privileges of biology teachers engaged with young people in these enterprises; great also are the responsibilities.

Sister Marian Catherine McGrann
East 1015 Boone Avenue
Spokane, Washington 99202