



STRATEGIES & METHODS IN LEARNING ENGLISH
For Adult ESOL Professionals

Volume III, Issue 1

Miami-Dade County Public Schools-Adult ESOL Program

September 2008

TOP TEN CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD ADULT ESOL TEACHER

It has often been said that the best teachers teach from the heart. Today, there are numerous studies that prove this premise and conclude that good teaching requires more than knowledge of the subject. Professor Bill Rhatican, a retired teacher from Fairfax County, recently published an article in *Education Matters*, (February 2008) identifying the top ten qualities of a good teacher. SMILE would like to share these characteristics with an *adult ESOL flair* and encourage our teachers to cultivate as many of these traits as possible during the new academic year. **Good adult ESOL teachers are...**

1. **Passionate and Enthusiastic** – Teachers must demonstrate that they care about the subject and the students. Students easily recognize the absence of passion, commitment and enthusiasm.
2. **Natural** – Teachers must be authentic and avoid “phoniness” which turns students off and creates a negative environment that hinders communication and learning.
3. **Honorable and Trustworthy** – Teachers must be fair and respect all students. No pets! No Targets! No Discrimination!
4. **Engaging and Humorous** – Teachers must keep students interested in the subject and facilitate fun and engaging class activities that keep students actively involved in learning.
5. **Demanding** – Students want teachers who challenge their intellect and extend their opportunities to acquire language. Aim to teach part of the time at L2 +1. Set high expectations and students will rise to meet them.
6. **Communicative** – Teachers should model easy-to-understand language and allow students opportunities to practice, interact and role play in English.
7. **Reasonable** - Teachers must expect the best from all students but understand that adults have complicated lives that impact performance, attendance, and ability to complete assignments. Give students some “wiggle room” in difficult times.
8. **Caring** – Teachers must truly care about each student and validate individual student’s needs, culture and background knowledge.
9. **Approachable** - ESOL students expect teachers to be available not only to facilitate language acquisition but also to advise, guide, and explain how life works in the United States. Adult ESOL students come to class not only to learn the language but also to acquire life and work skills that could help them obtain a job, adapt to the community, and participate in the American democratic system of government.
10. **Knowledgeable** – The fact that this characteristic was ranked so low indicates that although students expect teachers to know the subject matter, a teacher’s affective qualities are significantly more important to the students. Karl Menninger summarized the concept in a simple sentence when he said that **what the teacher is, is more important than what he teaches**. This statement is again validated by Mr. Rhatican’s results.

In summary, the ten top qualities that students want center around a teacher’s ability to connect with the students and incorporate effective delivery methods that facilitate learning, respect individual needs, and provide sustainable meaningful opportunities to learn English and advance in the United States. SMILE hopes that this short article inspires you to excel as an M-DCPS Adult ESOL teacher.

**The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires.**

*William Arthur Ward
20th Century American Author*



Spotlight on Project RYSE @ South Dade Adult

Mr. Robert A. Danache has been instrumental in making **Project RYSE** a great success at South Dade Adult Education Center. Mr. Danache, originally from Port Au Prince, Haiti arrived in the United States at the age of 11. His father accepted a teaching position at Roker College in Holton, Maine. It was then, in fifth grade, that Mr. Danache learned English. His father served as an inspiration to him to continue his education. As a result of his father’s insistence, Mr. Danache went on to college and received his degree from St. Thomas University in Miami, Florida.

Mr. Danache tries to do the same with his RYSE students. He said, “Some of my students even call me “Papi”. His main goal for the RYSE students is to have them pass the FCAT so they can get their high school diploma. This is the second year for RYSE at South Dade Adult Education Center and the results are apparent. Several students have passed the FCAT and have earned their high school diploma. Mr. Danache says that the key to success is repetition and persistence. Through this project the students are learning how to bridge the gap between the cultural differences they face everyday in this new country. In order to do this there are two key components:



1. Broaden the student’s horizons as to what is available to them in the academic and work arena.
2. Help the students overcome obstacles such as unstable home situations, lack of support, etc. by coaching, mentoring and facilitating the resources to meet everyday challenges that present themselves to at-risk students.

RYSE at South Dade has established a partnership with H. O. W. (Haitian Organization of Women). Through this partnership the students have been encouraged to develop vocational and entrepreneurial skills. RYSE students have been attending classes in cooking, auto detailing, sewing, banking, and many practical career-oriented areas. Students have been experiencing success in high school and vocational classes with the support of a targeted ESOL program that focuses on individual student’s needs, interests and background knowledge.

The twenty eight students who have participated in Project RYSE this year are grateful for the opportunity to improve their lives and become successful in the community. SMILE thanks Mr. Danache for a job well done and applauds South Dade Adult Center for taking on the challenge of servicing at-risk ELL students. *Article by Ms. Karen Johnson,*



UPCOMING EVENTS for TEACHERS

Resource Fair @ Ronald Reagan on Saturday, October 11th from 8:00 a.m to 12 noon – Lunch will be served. Contact Dr. Carbia for additional information: 305-995-7197 or 049490@dadeschools.net

New Teacher Orientation @ SBAB Annex Rm. 243 on October 14, 15 & 16th from 5:00 to 8:30 p.m.. Contact Ms. Metelow for additional information 305-995-1784 nicolemetelow@dadeschools.net

Dr. Joanne H. Urrutia Administrative Director Division of Bilingual Education	M-DCPS - Adult ESOL Program Division of Bilingual Education and World Languages	Dr. Beatriz Diaz, District Supervisor Adult ESOL Program
(305) 995-1945 jurrutia@dadeschools.net	1500 Biscayne Boulevard Rm. 324 Miami, Florida 33132	(305) 995-2982 bdiaz@dadeschools.net