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## The nuances that separate good educators from the great educators



Most of us are making our decisions in education based on how we wish the world was working.

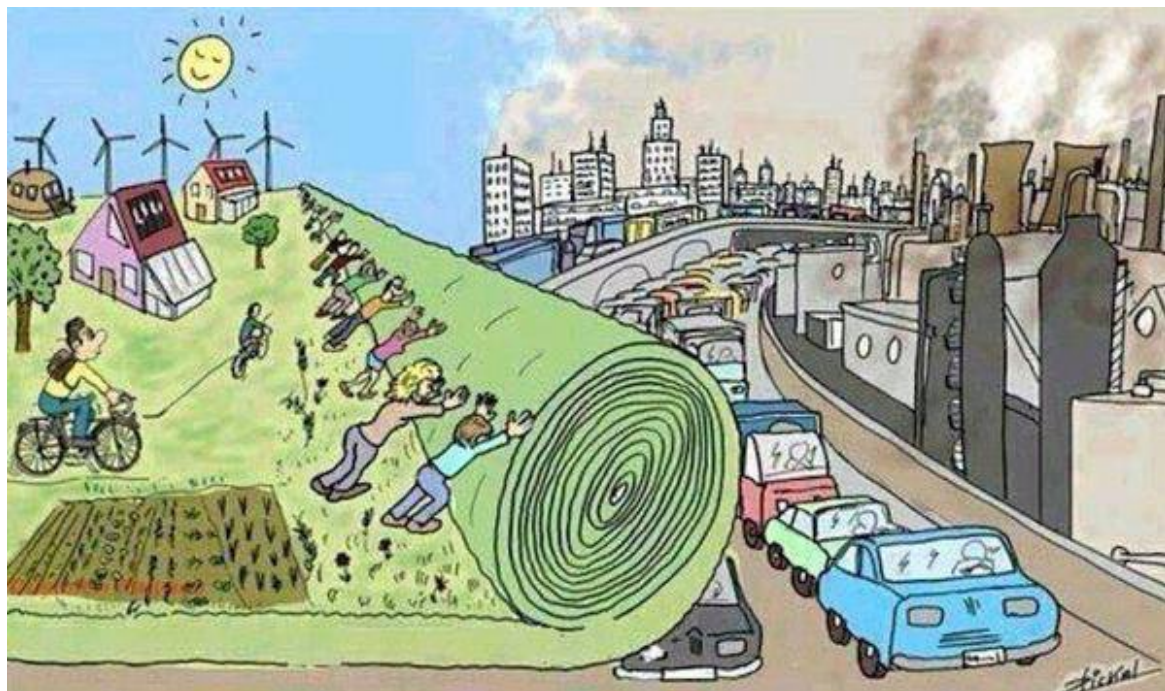
Here's a prime example. We take offense when we are sitting at a restaurant or a café and we see a couple paying more attention to their phones, then to each other. In this same way, we are upset when a student enters our classroom looking at his or her smart phone. Check that... mesmerized by the phone screen. In each of these instances we've made the mistake of romanticizing how we believe the world should be.

For me, I see a student coming into my classroom, and he's giggling while watching a YouTube video, and I'm thrilled that this student is doing this. I'm happy that they are being amused, and doing what they like. Because that is what he wants to be doing in that moment. I'm not bummed out because I think what I have to say is so utterly important that it can't be missed.

You see, I don't care about my own feelings. I'm not that important. This is what that student wants to do. This is what is going to put a smile on his face right then. Not me talking about today's agenda. So, here's the first take away. We need to check our egos at the door and realize that there is more to capturing student attention than most of us are aware of, and forcing attention only works a fraction as well as working harder to earn it.

In this post I promise to share four nuances that great educators are capitalizing on. These behaviors are what is differentiating them from everyone else, including those that are already good.

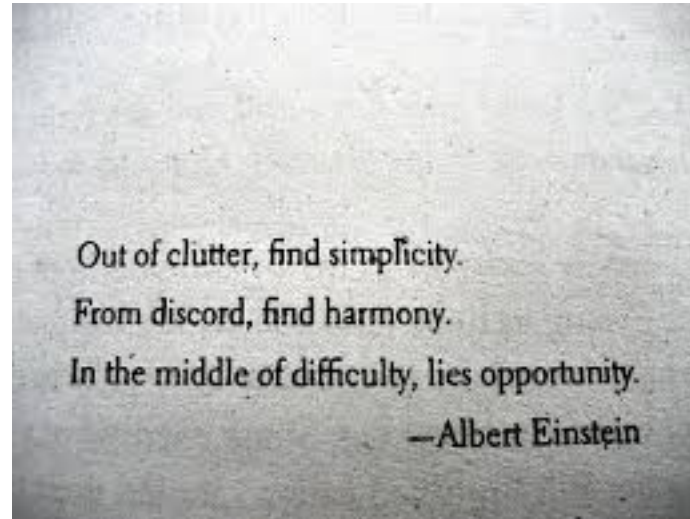
The one minute take away from this article is that great education is driven by two things: Purpose and Attention. The individuals that understand their purpose best and can engage the attention of learners at the highest level are going to be the most successful practitioners. Always remember that the learners' attention is always right. If you don't have it, then you are NOT teaching, you are just practicing. That's why you need to focus on the things that you can control.



Are educators too busy romanticizing how the world should be?

Now that we recognize how we need to check our egos and realize that our **most important job is to harness attention by competing for it**, rather than force attention. Let's see what characteristics differentiate the great educators from the good educators.

# Great educators are masters of simplifying ideas



Most people in education like to overcomplicate things. For instance, as if STEM subjects are not complicated enough, we now have decided let's go and make it into STEAM. Now, I'm not going to get into the details of how this overcomplicates the process of learning, but I will say this, the one true purpose of schooling is to share ideas. That's it. It's really quite simple. Tell stories that share ideas. Then create opportunities for learners to experience learning based on these new ideas that they have been introduced to.

Simplifying things is not only important in schooling, but it also applies to life, in general. Great teachers have an eye for detail. They tend to question the necessity of every detail. Are there too many words on this page? Is the video too long? Will there be too many activities?



Simplicity is purposeful

Their greatest strength is the ability to cut out the excess. To separate the good from the bad, the necessary from the unnecessary. It's all about understanding the simplest way to accomplish a task. They edit even if it means breaking certain rules because they realize that trying to do too much always compromises the experience.

## **Great educators are always hustling**

Let's face this, becoming a great educator is incredibly difficult. You have to be passionate, patient, empathetic, intelligent, kind, caring, compassionate, and so on. Maybe being an educator wasn't even your childhood dream. Oh snap! So, how do you overcome all of these challenges. Especially when most of your day to day experiences are out of your control? You have to hustle.

Realize that just about every other educator you are brushing elbows with is going to school, and working, and balancing a family or social life, and you'll soon realize that it takes an awful lot of hustle to shine.

This is why the most successful educators are focused on the **three pillars of success for educators**: Time | Resources | Talent



Now, everyone has limitations when it comes to talent and resources. So, these are topics for another post, but the one variable that we all have control of is our time. Manage it well and you can be a great educator.

What does this mean for you? Realize that the time spent between 8pm and 2am is where you are going to define your greatness. That is the one thing you have control of. Figure out how to spend that time well, and you are a “hustler baby”.

The take away on hustle is that great educators are simply people with SMART goals. They hustle to the point that they can drive inspiration

from everywhere- whether it's a twilight run in the woods or a trip to a museum, they'll find new inspirations for ideas that can captivate attention.

They are not trying to compete with other educators, they simply compete with themselves. They are focusing on ways to make better more interesting version of themselves. They focus on process, not results. They aim to solve the problem, not just to be echoes in the collect echo chamber. Hustling educators find new ways of thinking. They move away from tried-and-tested methods and use their creativity to find a unique style, that garners learners attention.

## **For great educators, a critique is an INSIGHT. NOT an INSULT.**

As an #educator, you've certainly had the experience of working with students, administrators and colleagues who have told you that what you are trying to do is not good. Or that what you are doing is not what they want to be doing. Typically, the reason why you are hearing this is because it is the first time this person is experiencing your idea. You probably have also heard from your colleagues that the learners can't do this, and they can't do that.

This can be a point of frustration. But you know what? Great educators do not crumble when they are met with resistance. They take critical feedback in stride. They don't have the attitude that they have to do this just to do it. Everything they do has a purpose, or they don't do it. If they had that attitude, then they would not be so danged motivated!

When met with resistance, just start with a simple why. Try to understand what stands in the learners way of engaging. Once you entertain the WHY, then find time to sit down with a clear mind, and put down every idea for HOW on paper. Ideate potential outcomes and the activities that will achieve those outcomes. Get them all out there. Then figure out your timeline.

Teaching and learning requires a human-centered, problem-solving approach. Approach them with empathy and self-awareness.

Chances are you won't solve the big challenges on the first shot. Expect to have some failures. Ideas and success will come to you in waves. If you

take every feedback as constructive criticism, rather than an insult, then you will begin to see your own flaws. The flaws that others are over-emphasizing. That my friends is self-awareness, and when you have this you will begin to go from ordinary to extraordinary.

### **Here are a few hacks for becoming self-aware (so you can better deal with feedback):**

- Focus on the problem, not the solution.
- Listen, listen, and listen...to your learners
- Stay focused on one thing at a time, and do it well.
- Never be afraid to fail. That's where you will learn and grow the most.

## **Great educators are ALWAYS thinking about the LEARNER!**



Always be thinking about the learner! Always.

When YouTube influencers upload a video they conduct a lot of research first before they hit the upload button. They check past analytics, choose the keywords, title and thumbnail carefully. They look at SEO results to

see what is trending. It's not as organic a process as we perceive it to be. There is a ton of data analytics that goes into a successful upload. Why?

The reason is that the movers and shakers of the world today are obsessed with the user. That is who needs to be captivated, the user. Well, in education, **THE LEARNER IS THE USER**. In the same way that YouTubers are focusing the upload launches on consumer habits like; viewability, understandability, responsiveness and engagement, educators need to analyze their content that they are producing.

Great educators are always asking how do we make the learner experience more intuitive, more pleasing, and more hassle-free? How do we remove barriers that hamper engagement? Once you hack these attention depleting issues, then you are ready to be a great educator.

## Outro

I'm not going to lie, there's a lot of #teachers out there who are frustrated. They are frustrated because they're teaching like it's 2006. You know, before the iPhone. Or they are teaching like it's 1995, before the Internet. There are even some who are teaching like it's 1983. That's the time before the personal computer started to creep into classrooms.



I've got news for you, the frustrated ones are going to keep being frustrated. They are stuck on theory and romance. They are trying to control



things that are completely and forever out of their control. Circling back now to where we began, they are worried about other people that are sitting at that cafe table on their phones. Here's the news flash, there's one thing that has peoples' attention, and it's that little remote control of life that we call a smart phone. So, you say you want proof? Now here's the proof, what are you reading this article on?

## TAKE ACTION

Follow me here on Medium, on [Twitter](#), and on [YouTube](#), and I promise I will share with you how you can harness this ATTENTION with #edtech, mobile- and micro- learning strategies #mLearning to be a great educator 👍

*Do you have any ideas on what sets the great educators apart? Please share your comments below so that together we can make school the best place to be!*

Interested in following up on the 3 pillars idea? You can check out my most recent vlog on the first pillar [Time \(and Attention\)](#):

**#teachervlog #edtech #education #school #daylightsavingstime**



