Building Better Teachers: Using Role-play to Create Content Experts

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What are the most important qualities of a good instructor?
What my students said:

“Mastery of content material.”

“Approachable and relatable.”

“Speaks clearly and has good handwriting.”

“Provides good examples and applications.”

“Responds to student questions.”

“Presents the material at a good pace.”
My students:

❖ Serve as calculus tutors in CalcLab for two hours a week.
❖ Have excelled in their calculus classes.
❖ Are in the content expert role for the first time.
Student answers, revisited:

“Mastery of content material.”

“Provides good examples and applications.”

“Approachable and relatable.”

“Responds to student questions.”

“Speaks clearly and has good handwriting.”

“Presents the material at a good pace.”
Three main ideas:

- Content knowledge
- Warmth
- Presentation skills

Which is the **most important**?
How can I effectively teach my students skills in all three categories?

Also, how can I challenge their perspective on the qualities most important to being a good instructor?

Practice through role-play.
Give students hands-on practice in a controlled, safe, and welcoming environment.

Allow students to reflect on effective teaching strategies, and to receive helpful feedback on their teaching.
Volunteers role-play as Teacher and Student solving a problem. The Audience observes.
The First Scenario:

- The teacher used the direct teaching method.
- The student didn’t speak until almost the end of the scenario!
- The audience thought this was a successful student-teacher interaction.
Challenging their perspective:

“How do you know if the student learned anything?”
Later Scenarios:

- The **student** took on a much more active role in the scenario.
- The **teacher** asked effective questions that assessed student understanding.
- Practiced not only content mastery and presentation skills, but also **warmth**.
Observing these changes throughout the semester also served as a barometer for my own teaching.
I was able to measure and observe the impact of my teaching.

I found myself being more mindful.

I paid more attention to how I modeled behaviors.
Role-play was more than just an effective method for teaching my students. It also helped me become a better teacher myself.
Thanks for listening!