

VOICES

from the Field:

WHAT IS A MASTER TEACHER?

STUDY GUIDE

A professional growth opportunity providing
individual or group reflection and analysis

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WHAT IS A MASTER TEACHER?

To begin your study of what it takes to become a master teacher, it is vital for you to have a baseline of where you are now in the teaching hierarchy as defined by *Voices from the Field: What Is a Master Teacher?* Therefore, we have provided the following self-assessment tool. Simply circle the number (1 to 4) which describes most closely how often you exemplify this characteristic.

Self-Assessment Chart



Level I: Foundational Characteristics

- 1 - I rarely display this characteristic
- 2 - I sometimes display this characteristic
- 3 - I regularly display this characteristic
- 4 - I exemplify this characteristic

*1. I create an environment that advances student learning.	1	2	3	4
2. I have a passion for teaching.	1	2	3	4
3. I have a respectful classroom.	1	2	3	4
4. I desire to be an excellent teacher.	1	2	3	4
5. I have high expectations of myself for becoming an exemplary teacher.	1	2	3	4
6. I believe all students can learn.	1	2	3	4
7. I foster and maintain the respect of my students.	1	2	3	4
8. I believe my teaching is affected by both my attitudes and skills.	1	2	3	4
9. I motivate students to set and strive for the highest expectations of themselves.	1	2	3	4
10. I exemplify ethical standards.	1	2	3	4

*The number relates to how these characteristics ranked as the result of responses from educators to the survey.

Level IV: Transformational Teacher Characteristics

1 - I rarely display this characteristic

2 - I sometimes display this characteristic

3 - I regularly display this characteristic

4 - I exemplify this characteristic

34. I collaborate with other teachers and administrators to improve my, their, and others' practices.	1	2	3	4
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35. I recognize and respond to students who have diverse cultural backgrounds.	1	2	3	4
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48. I help create a strong connection between home and school.	1	2	3	4
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50. I develop strong relationships with parents and guardians of students.	1	2	3	4
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51. I engage students in decision-making processes.	1	2	3	4
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52. I engage students in evaluating themselves.	1	2	3	4
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57. I seek information about students' backgrounds to improve my own teaching.	1	2	3	4
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67. I involve students in the development of classroom policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4
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Level V: Master Teacher Characteristics

1 - I rarely display this characteristic

2 - I sometimes display this characteristic

3 - I regularly display this characteristic

4 - I exemplify this characteristic

46. I work to improve school practices and procedures for the benefit of the students.	1	2	3	4
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47. I contribute to the teaching profession by sharing my expertise.	1	2	3	4
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58. I serve as a source of information and advice for other teachers in the school.	1	2	3	4
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59. I create a desire in others that they too can and should aspire to be an exemplary teacher.	1	2	3	4
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62. I work cohesively with the administration.	1	2	3	4
--	---	---	---	---

66. I assume leadership roles in school events and projects.	1	2	3	4
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1. Look at your self-assessment score at each of the levels. Circle the highest level below for which you gave the **majority of characteristics** a rating of 3 or above.



Level I: Foundational Teacher

Level II: Skill-Based Teacher

Level III: Accomplished Teacher

Level IV: Transformational Teacher

Level V: Master Teacher

This collection of beliefs, skills, and characteristics presents a good picture of where you see your level of mastery in teaching at this point in time. Remember, attaining master teacher status is a process. The idea is to strive to improve continually. The areas in which you assessed your capabilities at 1 or 2 indicate specific areas of work that deserve your time and attention.

2. Now that you have identified the level at which you currently operate, look at the level above the one you believe you have attained. (For instance, if you currently operate at Level II, look at your scores for Level III characteristics.) In the space below, list any characteristics for which you did not give yourself a rating of 3 or 4. Identify one to three things you can do in each area that would enable you to have mastered this level of teaching. What additional professional development might these actions require? (Share your thoughts with a colleague and get his or her feedback.)



3. React to the following statement: *“The pressure for teachers to teach and students to learn has reached the highest level in the history of the world. This focus is not going to diminish. It is only going to accelerate because of the reality that the world needs a highly educated and competitive workforce.”*



7. **The following 13 core beliefs that emerged from the research depict the values of a master teacher.** Which do you believe are the most important and why? Are there any items on the list that you don't believe should be included? Are there any that are left out? (Discuss the answers to these questions with a partner.)



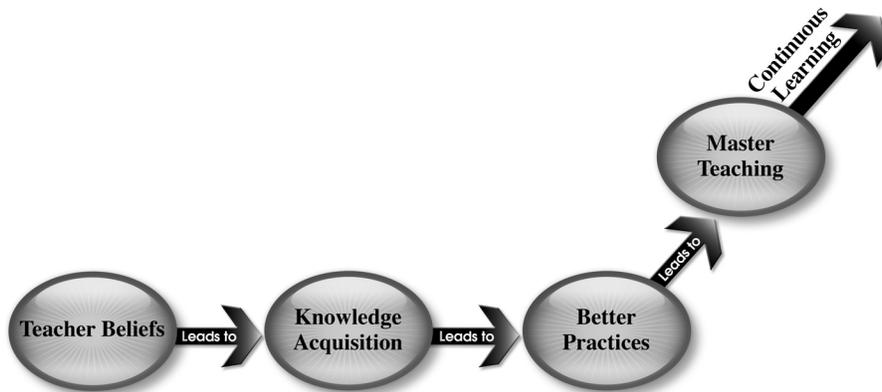
The 13 Core Beliefs of Master Teachers

1. The master teacher believes that teaching is both an art and a science and is affected by both teacher attitudes and skills.
2. The master teacher's work begins with and is supported by core beliefs about learning, learners, and the value of teaching and learning to society as a whole.
3. Master teachers believe they must be student-centered and that all students can learn.
4. Master teachers believe that they are the catalysts for student learning.
5. The master teacher is a lifelong learner and a reflective practitioner.
6. The master teacher is highly effective with all types of learners, and his or her students demonstrate that they are prepared for learning at the next level as a result of his or her teaching.
7. The master teacher is respectful of students, parents, and colleagues.
8. The master teacher is a mentor, coach, and advocate for students and colleagues.
9. The master teacher is highly competent in his or her subject matter and is passionate about what he or she teaches and for learning as a whole. As a result, he or she engenders in students a passion for learning.
10. The master teacher believes that high expectations, good relationships with students, and working cooperatively with colleagues are vital keys to being a master teacher.
11. The master teacher has a concern for the whole student, whole school, whole district, whole community, and whole of the profession.
12. Master teaching requires knowing students as well as the teacher knows the curriculum in order to inspire and motivate students and fit the curriculum to students. This is vital because fitting students to the curriculum will not result in learning for a large percentage of the class.
13. The master teacher gives back to the profession in many ways, including by nurturing the desire in others that they too can and should aspire to be master teachers.

8. The chart below demonstrates the link between teacher beliefs and student learning results. What evidence have you observed or personally experienced to know this to be true?



How Teacher Beliefs Lead to Master Teaching



9. The following statement comes from the book:



“When one is witness to an exceptional teacher in action, one is often in awe of how expertly such a teacher blends both art and science into the teaching act. Not only are the majority of this teacher’s lessons artful in their presentation and delivery, but the scientific methodology used renders the lessons to be extremely effective for all learners.”

Recall and describe a time when you have experienced or observed this level of teaching.

10. Talent, circumstances, and chance certainly play roles in a teacher's success. Yet, how might the desire to be excellent trump talent and circumstances as an important element to becoming a highly successful teacher?



11. A statement from a participant in the research was: *"I believe that any teacher who is just teaching because it is a job or paycheck should find another job. This is a calling, and if it ever becomes just a job, then it is time to leave or retire. The stakes are too high and the consequences of that kind of attitude are too grave."*



Is this statement realistic? Should all teachers be held to this standard? What responsibility, if any, does the teaching profession have to ensure that those who teach are doing so for the right reasons?

Your Take-Away

Through your participation in this chapter's exercises, you should:

- Know the level of teaching you have mastered at this point in time.
- Have a grasp of the characteristics that a master teacher exhibits.
- Understand the core beliefs that underpin a master teacher's actions and why these beliefs are so important.
- Have identified a realistic set of actions you can take to achieve the next level of mastery.