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## Beyond the Curriculum

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# Beyond the Curriculum

Throughout my 21 years as a student, I have experienced many teachers. Some mentors who nurtured my education and passion, others who simply just passed me along to the next step. As a dedicated lifelong learner, and eventual teacher in the medical field as a practicing physician, I find myself reflecting on what made my most impactful mentors so influential. I have concluded that *teaching is way more than just imparting knowledge on students*. In order to teach, there must first be a safe, inclusive learning environment. An environment in which students feel valued and respected. An environment in which students are encouraged to ask questions and provides room for mistakes. Only then can students grow and engage in the critical thinking that will be a force of success in their future careers.

True teaching means not just guiding students in what they should think, but how they should think. It means inspiring them to be curious and explore new ideas. It means encouraging them to challenge themselves, even if they are afraid to fail. It means reassuring them to bounce back even stronger and more dedicated when they do fail. The best educators can recognize that each student is unique in their strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. They adapt to their students' needs to provide them with the support and resources they need to be successful. Some of the most important qualities that distinguish excellent teachers from the average are patience, compassion, and empathy. Each student comes from a different background and may be dealing with serious struggles outside of their academic life. A supportive mentor is willing to listen, offer guidance, and exemplify a stable influence in their student's life. One of the most crucial qualities of a true teacher is the commitment to lifelong learning. A teacher's education, along with the education of their students', is never ending.

It means dedicating yourself to stay up to date on the latest research and being open to adapt to new thinking according to the latest innovations. It also means being accepting of feedback and striving to improve your own teaching practices. This is how we all evolve and continue to learn throughout our careers.

True teaching is having the power to make a positive impact on students' lives and being inspired by your mentees. It is fostering the kind of environment that helps them grow as individuals. It instills confidence and independence so they are capable of achieving their goals. Teachers have the immense responsibility of shaping minds and passing on compassion to their students. They are not only teaching their students critical thinking, but also how to treat others. They are a clear role model to their students and pass on more than just knowledge. They teach lessons that students will carry with them through life. One day, those very students will pass on the many teachings that impacted their lives. The mentors who taught beyond their curriculums influenced my life and career the most. I learned these valuable characteristics that create a true teacher from them, and I look forward to paying it back with my mentees in the future.

AUTHOR, SYDNEY MOLENAAR



- ▶ Sydney Molenaar is currently a third-year medical student at KPCOM. She is originally from Arizona and graduated college from Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University. She studied Biological Sciences and has dedicated her life to pursuing a career in medicine so she can serve communities in need.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR: SYDNEY MOLENAAR