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## *Characteristics of the New Generation of Teachers*

### **CHAPTER OBJECTIVES**

- To introduce Generation Y
- To describe the issues surrounding vacancies in the classroom
- To describe the various types of teachers entering these classrooms
- To describe the characteristics of Generation Y
- To describe multiple intelligences and emotional intelligence and connect them to Generation Y teachers

### **VIGNETTE**

*Andy is a Generation Y teacher who has just taken a job in a local school district. During his interview, he was particularly disturbed by one of the questions posed: "How long do you expect to remain a teacher at this school?" He explained that he chose teaching as a career for life, and hoped that his skills and the fit in this particular school would enable him to be a lifelong teacher there. He then proceeded to ask why the question was posed, wondering if there was a high teacher turnover. The interviewer explained that of all*

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*Generation Y teachers they had hired in the last five years, approximately 75 percent left within three years. The turnover was becoming a huge problem for the school as it was creating instability among the staff, students, and parents. The principal, in particular, was worried about how this was affecting morale in the school and the school culture, never mind the intense cost and time for hiring every year.*

*After Andy started his job, he approached the principal again about this constant issue of turnover. He suggested that they meet to establish what might be working or not working for these new teachers. During the course of the year, Andy and the principal established, among other things, a more modern mentoring program, some professional development opportunity choices for newer teachers, and some guidelines for acceptable technological use within the school. Andy explained that as a Generation Y teacher, he expected all these things to be established in his new position. He was glad to help the principal start to evaluate some of the criteria by which Generation Y teachers may be judging the school or district, and to think about changes that would help integrate new teachers to the school.*

## CHARACTERISTICS OF GENERATION Y

Of course, as is the situation with all prior and future generations, each has a unique set of characteristics. Thus Generation Y teachers, assistant principals, principals, and other administrators are somewhat culturally different from other generations. These differences are generalizations and may not apply to a given person. Also, some Generation Y people may exhibit only a few of the indicators. The purpose for including these differences here and in the five subsequent chapters is to inform and assist principals and superintendents as they hire and integrate Generation Y employees with other generations of employees. The characteristics are in no specific order of importance or relevance.

One of the most important characteristics of Generation Y is the desire to trust authority. Baby Boomers traditionally had little trust or admiration for authority and government. What Generation Y employees want from their leaders are examples of behaviors that can be admired, leading toward trust for those leaders. It's difficult to ask people to trust principals and superintendents just on blind faith supported merely by the title of their leadership position. Admired behavior is a powerful force that can transform a school or school district into a true learning community where all employees feel appreciated and know that they can count on the goodness of intention when administrators make decisions that can affect their lives.

Another characteristic of Generation Y has been reflected even in the popular media in tandem with the economic crisis facing the United States and, indeed, all world markets. For some time, people have placed a significant amount of social and economic self-worth on what they owned in terms of property and investment portfolios. However, now there is a shift that economists refer to as human capital. It is the value one places on making a living, which is based on an individual's work ethic, skills, and education. How these human assets are utilized in getting a job constitutes a

kind of capital that will not be easily diminished. Of course, there are fewer jobs, but the competition for the remaining jobs will be fierce and the winners will probably be those with the most human capital. This is the way that Generation Y looks upon their future economic stability. They value salary and fringe benefits along with wanting to get ahead in a shorter period of time as they seek out purposeful employment (Kiviat, 2009).

## VACANCIES IN THE CLASSROOM

In 2001, the government projected that over 2 million new teachers for the classroom would need to be hired in that decade (Teachers, 2001). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (as cited in Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2006), the average turnover rate is 17 percent a year. The National Education Association (as cited in Kopkowski, 2007) states that one-third of teachers leave within the first three years and up to 46 percent leave in the first five years. Issues leading to vacancies in the classroom include retirement, career shifts, personal problems, salary, lack of funding, lack of respect and support from parents and/or administrators, lack of adequate time for professional growth and planning, and bureaucratic initiatives such as the No Child Left Behind Act. More specifically, vacancies in the classroom can be categorized three ways: teachers leave the classroom because of retirement, teachers leave the classroom for personal reasons or to change careers, and teachers transfer schools. No matter what the reason, it is obvious that continual vacancies occur in America's classrooms at a significantly high rate.

Constant teacher turnover costs America hundreds of millions of dollars annually to recruit and prepare teachers (Futernick, 2007, p. 1); thus, it is crucial that administrators arm themselves with knowledge about hiring and retaining the best teachers possible. Other "costs" that are affiliated include the loss of teacher experience related to instructional continuity and appropriate behaviors. It is unlikely that teacher attrition and turnover rates will decrease dramatically over the next five to ten years; thus, to increase stability in the school, administrators should have the tools and knowledge to hire staff as effectively as possible. This requires understanding why vacancies occur in their schools or districts, and what types of teachers are expected to replace these vacancies.

## NEWLY HIRED VETERAN TEACHERS

Many teachers who are hired in a school or district are actually experienced, "veteran" teachers who change districts because of spousal moves, opportunities for safer working conditions, better pay, and/or changes in what may appear to be a stagnant school. Hiring veteran teachers is very different than hiring new teachers because the individuals already have so

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much knowledge and experience about education. Because of this, they often “cost more” than newly qualified teachers. Many progressive districts hire veteran teachers because they have a strong “track record.” However, their experiences may be in a very different type of school; therefore, it is crucial that the hiring administrator be satisfied that the teacher will fit with the mission and culture of the school (this is discussed further in Chapter 3). Nevertheless, veteran teachers can be a great asset to any school because they typically need less mentoring and coaching and can be extremely effective from the beginning.

### **PROFESSIONALS CHANGING CAREERS TO TEACHING**

Another type of new teacher is one who changes a current career to teaching. Sometimes these individuals complete a traditional teaching bachelor’s degree, essentially “going back to school” from one career to teaching. However, one of the major recent trends in education has been alternative certification. For example, in order to meet the demand for qualified teachers in positions that are difficult to fill, such as mathematics and science, some state departments of education have developed alternative certification programs. Such programs usually require the interested person to have a college or university degree along with related experience. The purpose is to provide a way for qualified individuals to obtain certification in a relatively short period of time. Such programs are usually offered through colleges and universities. The curriculum varies while the emphasis is placed on teaching methodologies, along with necessary instruction in child and adolescent development. For example, a retired chemical engineer may seek such certification in order to teach high school chemistry. The target population is people seeking a second career.

Alternative certification as a means to enter the classroom can also include a holding a bachelor’s degree in a particular field, and then completing teacher certification or a master’s degree with certification in teaching; completing a bachelor’s teaching degree while being employed in schools; and completing a program such as Teach for America or Troops to Teachers.

Despite the popularity of alternative certification and adults returning to enter the teaching profession, the vast majority of newly certified teachers are traditional-age graduates from a four-year university program. These new teachers are Generation Y.

### **THE EMERGENCE OF GENERATION Y**

While no exact definition of Generation Y exists, many agree that it is the generation of children born approximately between 1980 and 1995. Some sources say Generation Y are those born between 1977 and 1986; others say

between 1976 and 2000; and still others say 1977 and 1995. This places the first of Generation Y college students having attended college around the year 2000. This generation is preceded by Generation X, and many Generation Y children are children of the Baby Boomer generation. Along with being the most diverse group of individuals to enter the teaching field, some characteristics of this generation that will be discussed more in detail are their tendencies to:

- Communicate more through technology than in person
- Value benefits at work
- Seek career advancement, desire flexibility and higher pay
- Work in teams and possess high energy
- Work hard but also enjoy pleasure
- Be financially savvy
- Want constant feedback
- Work among and with a diverse group of individuals
- Multitask proficiently
- Like change

Some of the issues related to Generation Y's upbringing include hovering and very involved parents, being nurtured, being programmed with lots of activities, and being taught that they have high worth. At this writing, they are the most child-centered generation. Sometimes they are described as high maintenance but also high performance. They are also known as the Nexters, Millennials, iGen, or the Internet (or Net) generation.

Many Generation Y teachers were recently Generation Y students who were deeply connected to their parents. Many relied on e-mail and cell phones to communicate daily with their parents—especially as they attended college elsewhere (Tapscott, 1998, p. 23). They also make decisions jointly with their parents who are often quite demanding (Howe & Strauss, 2007, p. 4). They emerged as a group of young adults who like collaboration and working with others. Diversity is a part of their lives, much like technology, and in using technology (where ethnicity and gender are often invisible), they learn to work well together. They also spend a lot of money. Most Generation Y high school and college students have credit cards with fairly high limits. Companies market quite a lot to this age group, as there are so many Millennials with much spending power (Pletka, 2007, p. 35).

As can be seen by the lists generated above, there are many characteristics to cover about Generation Y. Probably the starkest difference between Generation Y and any other generation is the large, available access to information. All traditional college-age graduates entering schools as teachers this year are from Generation Y. These people believe that knowledge is power, and all knowledge can be found quickly through the Internet (Wong & Wong, n.d.). This group of individuals is particularly technology savvy. They blog, Google, and use Wikipedia to acquire sources of information.

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Howe and Strauss (2007) believe that this new generation of graduating students will enter the workforce making changes as the Baby Boomer generation did during the 1960s (p. 4). The young adults entering professions today are very ethnically diverse as well as dominated by females. They are typically eager to please others and work hard to achieve their goals in the process. Along with enjoying group work and community service (Levine & Cureton, 1998, p. 4), they enjoy their families, expecting to live at home or near their parents as they enter the workforce. With all of these characteristics in mind, Howe and Strauss (2007) believe that there are seven core traits that can be identified for Generation Y:

1. They are made to feel they are *special*.
2. They have been *sheltered* by their parents and society.
3. They are *confident* with high levels of trust and optimism.
4. They have developed strong team building skills (*team-oriented*).
5. They are *conventional*, following rules and standards.
6. They have been *pressured* to study hard and excel.
7. They are high *achieving* and highly educated.

As stated earlier, another important aspect of Generation Y is the diversity of the group. Not only have they lived with diversity their whole lives, the racial and ethnic makeup of the group is more different than ever before. "In 1999, nonwhites and Latinos accounted for nearly 36 percent of the eighteen-or-under population, a share half-again higher than for the Boomer age brackets, and nearly *three times* higher than for today's seniors" (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 15). Howe and Strauss (2000) also state that one in five has an immigrant parent, and one in ten has a noncitizen parent—making this generation very globally minded and connected.

The characteristics described here provide some background knowledge about differences between Generation Y and previous generations. While more topics will be discussed at length in the proceeding chapters, there are two important issues that need to be addressed in this chapter for further understanding about Generation Y, multiple intelligences and emotional intelligence.

## MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

Generation Y has been the most child-centered generation to attend school. Coinciding with this, schools have changed to include diverse learners in an attempt to create educated and successful young adults. The theory of multiple intelligences has facilitated this movement for Generation Y. The multiple intelligences theory was first proposed by Howard Gardner in

1983, and has received much recognition since (Dvinicki, 2004, pp. 214–215). This theory states that it is incorrect to assume that there is only one type of intelligence, such as IQ; instead, there are multiple types of intelligences. The seven original intelligences in this theory are (1) visual-spatial, (2) linguistic, (3) logical-mathematical, (4) bodily-kinesthetic, (5) musical-rhythmic, (6) interpersonal-social, and (7) intrapersonal-introspective. Two others have followed, identified as naturalist-physical world and existential intelligences (Fogarty & Stoehr, 2008, p. 6). It is possible to excel in more than one intelligence, but probably not all. Because students learn in different ways and have talents in various things at various levels, an effective school is one that can create the most conducive learning environment for children despite their learning differences. Therefore, students should be immersed in multiple methods of learning to best understand the curriculum.

Gardner believes that there are “multiple approaches to understanding” in the following six ways to approach topics: (1) narrative (telling stories), (2) numerical (using numbers or statistics), (3) existential (couched in philosophy), (4) aesthetic (using art), (5) hands-on (using activities), and (6) social (using group methods). The real point of practicality with the theory of multiple intelligences is that teachers and administrators must realize that there are multiple ways that people learn best, and using a variety of techniques reaches the greatest number of students. For example, a history teacher might use a film (narrative) as well as a group discussion project (social) for a particular topic. Using a variety of techniques helps to focus on the process of learning and not the differences among learners.

Generation Y teachers may have been taught themselves as children in schools or classrooms with teachers knowing and planning lessons around the theory of multiple intelligences. This enables an administrator to ask these teachers to utilize various intelligences in their own teaching, and to help facilitate older teachers’ methods if needed. Administrators should expect teachers to allow children the freedom to learn content through a variety of techniques. Using multiple methods for teaching and learning allows children to utilize their strengths in understanding regardless of the school’s curriculum goals.

In particular, Gardner explains that interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence deal with individuals’ abilities to understand other people and themselves, respectively. These intelligences were precursors to the theory of emotional intelligence—another important aspect for all teachers and schools.

## **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Emotional intelligence has been described by Goleman (1995) as a trait whereby individuals must develop an understanding of themselves and

others both emotionally and intellectually; then they can direct interactions and activities with others successfully (Fink, 2003, p. 47). Descriptors for emotional intelligence include being able to motivate oneself when faced with frustrations, to control one's impulses, to delay gratification as appropriate, to regulate one's moods as it pertains to interactions with others, and to empathize and hope (Goleman, 1995, p. 34). In other words, emotional intelligence relates to interpersonal skills—those who manage feelings well and deal effectively with others' feelings. This is crucial in school communication and interactions. All teachers must “read” students, parents, and administrators' body language, interpret the feeling behind statements made, and interact on a regular basis. In addition, personal intelligences in schools must be taught to children; in order to do so, teachers must understand emotional intelligence.

Often, the most successful people in life are not those who have the highest GPA or IQ, but instead are those who can communicate and interact positively with others within socially acceptable boundaries. Teachers of all generations typically must have positive emotional intelligence in order to be effective in the classroom and within a school. There has been concern that Generation Y teachers do not understand social boundaries and lack emotional intelligence due to their experiences of dealing in virtual social networks rather than in reality-based social interactions including face to face interactions. Walmsley and McManemy (2008) have coined the term, “character dysfunction,” (par. 3) to describe the lack of social skills affecting one's ability to create and maintain successful professional relationships. Teachers with character dysfunctions cannot be as effective with others on a regular basis because they lack social abilities. For example, suppose a teacher cannot look directly at fellow teachers or parents while discussing children or a particular problem in school, or, a teacher quickly “flies off the handle” when a fellow teacher suggests a different approach to a discipline problem. These are simple examples of individuals who need education and practice regarding socially appropriate and acceptable behavior in a professional context. While technology can be “blamed” for the lack of interpersonal skills, it is not a valid excuse. Many teachers who use technology on a regular basis are able to have positive social interactions. And, while teachers of all ages may lack positive social skills, an administrator should be aware that the issue of emotional intelligence may need to be addressed more with newly hired teachers.

Some educators group emotional intelligence and character education together. Administrators can use character education as a tool for educating students, but also as reminders of how they expect teachers to interact in positive ways. Strong emotional intelligence between administrator and teacher breeds a positive school culture (school culture is addressed in

Chapter 3). Can emotional intelligence be taught? Goleman (1995) provides one theory in understanding and teaching emotional intelligence following these steps: know one's own emotions; manage one's own emotions; motivate oneself; recognize emotions in others; and handle relationships with others by managing others' emotions (p. 43). Children need to be taught emotional intelligence in schools because it will promote the social interactions and welfare of all children. Promotion of emotional intelligence can educate students in social competence and prevention of behavioral problems; this creates strong relationship-building skills and empathy among children.

The importance of emotional intelligence and how it relates to the success of an individual has been debated. However, Mayer (2001) states that emotional intelligence and academic intelligence should be equally examined, as true success could be a solid partnership between the two (p. 24). In fact, Elias, Hunter, and Kress (2001) state, "When we look closer at 'academics,' we can see further similarities of curriculum content areas and EI [emotional intelligence] and see that EI skills rest clearly within the central mission of the schools" (pp. 139–140). Therefore, administrators must be aware and articulate the expectation of their teachers to effectively teach skills related to interactions and relationships alongside academics.

## SUMMARY

Vacancies in the classroom are being filled with various types of teachers. This includes veteran teachers moving areas or returning to the classroom as well as professionals changing careers. However, the majority of newly entering teachers are those from traditional education programs who are around age 22. These teachers are from the latest generation of adults entering the workforce: Generation Y. There are unique characteristics defining this generation as they enter and fill positions in the workforce. Finally, the issues of multiple intelligences and emotional intelligence are equally pertinent to teaching children and interacting with Generation Y teachers.

## CASE STUDY A

Mrs. Mallioux has recently moved to a rural area and has taken a job as principal of the local high school. Upon arrival, she realizes that she needs to fill five teacher vacancies. As the school year begins, she collects data on demographics of her teachers. She realizes the majority of teachers have

been in the building for over ten years, and now she has five new teachers. Upon further investigation, she realizes that the newest teachers have continually left the building and district over the past five years, with most of them only staying one year to teach. Since she is interested in having a diverse group of teachers of all ages, she decides she must inquire as to why so many of the newer teachers have been leaving. In particular, she wants to build a strong teaching staff with minimal turnover as she begins her own administration career in this district.

She decides to interview veteran teachers in the building to assess their opinions regarding newly hired teachers. She also gains permission from her five new teachers (all whom have just graduated from college and are entering their first teaching job) to watch them closely and to meet regularly with them to fully understand issues they face. From her research and what she saw at her last school where she was a teacher, Mrs. Mallioux notices that beginning teachers often feel a lack of collaboration and solidarity in the profession. In particular, new teachers often seek each other out as a support network. While this type of support is helpful, other novice teachers may not have the experience and knowledge to offer suggestions and advice that the veteran teachers may be able to provide. In other words, these new teachers are expected to be experts from the beginning. The stress and unrealistic expectations lead many young teachers to leave.

Aware of this information and the school's history of new teacher attrition, Mrs. Mallioux decides she is going to focus on a mentoring program partnering veteran teachers with her five new teachers. When she approaches the ten veteran teachers about becoming strong mentors for these new teachers, she learns that they are not necessarily interested. Some of their comments are, "Why do we need to put our time and effort into mentoring? They all leave anyway." "Those new teachers use so many different teaching methods and styles and I can't help them." And, "I can't stand all that flashy technology they have . . . they would rather 'Google' it than listen to what I have to say."

Analyze the scenario described above by answering the following questions:

- How should Mrs. Mallioux proceed?
- What other programs or meetings can she have with the veteran teachers to begin a mentoring program?
- What other programs or meetings can she have with the new teachers to understand their generation and needs?
- What interactions between the new and veteran teachers should Mrs. Mallioux facilitate, and how?
- Mrs. Mallioux is worried that the new teachers are leaving because of some of the characteristics she has heard about their generation. Provide some examples of those characteristics that might be interpreted negatively by the veteran teachers.

**CASE STUDY B**

Over the years, Dr. Young has worked to build a strong school district. He became superintendent of a small urban school system five years ago, and he has worked tirelessly at providing teacher in-service, family information sessions, monetary allocations for teachers to further their education, and strategies to improve students' test scores. In particular, he has focused his district on revising curriculum to make a strong, cohesive plan for all academic content areas from elementary through high school. Dr. Young feels that academically, his district is doing great. His next plan for strengthening the schools in his district is to begin focusing on the issue of emotional intelligence and character education; however, he is worried that his academic strength will weaken if he begins to focus on emotional intelligence.

Dr. Young asks for five teachers, one from each school building, to volunteer to be part of a task force to provide him with some information on emotional intelligence and how it can be used not only in the schools, but in the curriculum where it does not diminish the focus on academics. He is also interested in teachers' perceptions about focusing the district on emotional intelligence. After two months, this group reports to Dr. Young. Some of the information includes teachers' perceptions that students do need some sort of character education, in particular at the elementary school level; teachers' perceptions that the brightest students are not always the most successful as they leave high school and move on in their careers; and teachers' perceptions that students should learn more in school than just academics. Regarding how emotional intelligence is currently or could be included in the curriculum, some examples the teachers developed are:

- In analyzing literature, students are expected to understand feelings and motivations of characters (Elias et al., 2001, p. 140).
- In studying history, students should understand motives behind a chronology of events.
- In learning to read and write, children often "free write" about their experiences. This almost always includes feelings and opinions as they begin to develop essays and stories.

After Dr. Young receives the feedback, he decides to pursue the initiative of incorporating emotional intelligence in his district.

Analyze the scenario described above by answering the following questions:

- What should be Dr. Young's first step in implementing an emotional intelligence component into the curriculum?
- In your opinion, at which level is it most important to focus on emotional intelligence: elementary, middle, or high school?
- List at least three other ways that emotional intelligence can be incorporated into academics at your school or in your district.

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- Do you agree that the teachers' perceptions about the need for emotional intelligence are representative of needs in many American schools?
- Provide a situation you have seen or been a part of in your building where a teacher did not have strong interpersonal skills or lacked emotional intelligence.
- How could you explain to parents the need for an emotional intelligence aspect to the curriculum?
- Do you agree that emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills are equally as important as academic ability? Explain why or why not.
- In what ways, if any, have you seen Generation Y adults lack emotional intelligence?

### EXERCISE

#### Do you know the accurate characteristics for Generation Y?

Below are general statements about Generation Y. List T (true) or F (false) next to each statement. (Answers are at the bottom of the quiz.) Some statements will be controversial; you may list undecided as long as you can support your choice.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Generation Y adults have never witnessed severe economic trouble.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Collaborative learning is second-nature to Generation Y teachers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Generation Y teachers feel generally negative about themselves and their working abilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Generation Y is the least prejudiced generation about race.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Generation Y professionals do not feel they can talk easily about religion and faith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Work-life balance is important to Generation Y workers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Generation Y workers are generally not self initiated risk-takers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Generation Y would rather be "supervised" than "coached."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Generation Y and Generation X have similar technological skills and needs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Generation Y expects diversity and up-to-date technology in the workplace.

Answers: 1.F, 2.T, 3.F, 4.T, 5.F, 6.T, 7.T, 8.F, 9.F, 10.T

**CHAPTER FOCUS QUESTIONS**

1. Provide a definition of emotional intelligence and what it means to you.
2. Provide some examples of how emotional intelligence can be infused in your school's academic curriculum.
3. How have Generation Y teachers in your school or district used multiple intelligences to enhance instruction?
4. What characteristics of Generation Y have you seen in your recently hired teachers?
5. What are the most common reasons for vacancies in the classroom?
6. Can you identify and explain any differences in relationship building among Generation Y teachers because of the different relationships these teachers may have had with their own parents during their upbringing?