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Description

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will spend half a billion dollars over the next three years to devise a means of determining what exactly makes teachers most effective in the classroom.

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Citation

MLA

**APA**

**CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE**

**Transcript**
Can Teaching Excellence Be Measured?
BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
Tonight we take on the question of what makes a great teacher. It's a question Microsoft founder Bill Gates really wants to answer. He's putting a big chunk of his own fortune into finding out. Tonight, Tom Brokaw talks to Bill Gates who is a supporter of this education summit.
ERIN SCUTT (6th Grade Teacher): Let's--how much more time do you need with your group?
TOM BROKAW, reporting:
In any classroom, this is the engine that powers the day: the teacher.
DIANA CHEN (6th Grade Teacher): So what do you mean by times that number?
BROKAW: But as we all know from personal experience, some teachers are just so much better than others.
AMY PILLER: Raise your hand if you feel like you know a little better how to build this...
BROKAW: What makes a great teacher? That's a question with so many parts.
BILL GATES: Do they work longer hours? Do they break the classroom down more? You're a tough competitor.
BROKAW: Microsoft founder Bill Gates is spending a half a billion dollars over the next five years to find out. What are the essential elements of a great teacher? How do we measure them?
GATES: There isn't a lot of raw data out there where you can take what goes on in the classroom, both classroom, lecture, group, one-on-one type things, and try and connect that to, OK, some teachers are really good with students who are ahead. Some are really good at calming the classroom.
SCUTT: Can you use more specific words?
BROKAW: It's called MET, the Measures of Effective Teaching, a three-year study by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Three thousand teachers around the country have agreed to be evaluated...
SCUTT: Take a seat.
BROKAW: ...by video, by student questionnaires, by the teachers themselves, and by the results of student performance on standardized tests. How do you respond to those teachers who say, 'Look, I just can't teach to a test?'

GATES: If you want something to be excellent, it can't go unmeasured.

PILLER: Someone want to help her out?

BROKAW: Sixth grade teacher Amy Piller came from a school where she says she was never observed during her first two years of teaching. Now at PS 126 in New York, she's evaluated all the time.

PILLER: I would say that I kind of enjoy being under the microscope, to be fair. I'm getting observed in multiple ways. It makes me feel like I'm learning every day.

BROKAW: What about the teacher establishment? And there is one.

PILLER: Mm-hmm.

BROKAW: You know, between the unions and people that have been around for a long time, have real resistance to some of the changes that are coming on? Do you butt up against that a little bit?

PILLER: Teachers really want fair evaluation. And I think that the resistance comes when they feel like the evaluation is not going to reflect what's actually going on.

BROKAW: Which is partly why Bill Gates showed up this summer at the American Federation of Teachers convention.

GATES (file): We talked about these measurement issues. Those of you who are backing these new measures are taking a risk. Why would you do it?

RANDI WEINGARTEN (American Federation of Teachers President): We're both trying to figure out how to look at great teachers and deconstruct their practice.

BROKAW: So do you like reading more now than you did a year ago?

UNIDENTIFIED CHILD: It's gotten a lot easier because teachers have gotten better and better in helping me.

BROKAW: So what has been learned so far?

GATES: If you say to the students, 'Does my teacher use the time in class well,' and when I'm confused, does the teacher help straighten me out,' the answer to those questions gives us hope that we can use these multiple measures and we'll know more about what a great teacher looks like.

BROKAW: And what they have to say.

CHEN: The best thing is getting experience, learning from other teachers who have done it so well, and sharing best practices.

SCUTT: You have to understand your students on many levels, not just what they can do academically.

BROKAW: So the real question is, can you teach me math?

CHEN: Absolutely.

BROKAW: I don't think so.

GATES: Math is fun.

BROKAW: Brian, that may be too great a challenge for even the best of the teachers.

WILLIAMS: You and me both.

BROKAW: But the bottom line is, to be an effective teacher you cannot approach your class as one size
fits all. Different kids do have different needs, and the most effective teachers they've discovered so far recognize that. They also create a climate that is exciting, even organizing competitive teams to tackle math problems. For example, most of all, students are most productive when they feel that the teachers care about them as individuals, Brian.

WILLIAMS: And at least we're all talking about this. Tom Brokaw, always a pleasure. Thanks.