

40 Million Strong

The Y Generation group has many positive attributes that lend themselves to teaching. These qualities are in the **Going Beyond** folder for the *Epilogue* at EffectiveTeaching.com.

Here They Come, the Next Generation of Teachers

The average age of teachers is 52.5, and more than a million will retire in the next ten years. In their place will come the Generation Y, or Millennials, born between 1977 to 1986, comprising a potential workforce of 40 million. Indeed, many are here already! Unlike the baby boomers and Generation X, who were typically more independent and entrepreneurial-minded (they gave us Dell, Yahoo, and Google), Gen Ys tend to be more participatory. They are socially adept at working in groups or teams and are avid users of online social networking tools such as MySpace and Facebook. **A learning community is their forte; thus, working collaboratively in groups is second nature to them.**

Gen Y teachers are products of a technologically advanced global economy—an interconnected, collaborative environment. They are knowledge workers with ubiquitous access to powerful laptops and 21st century technology and digital resources.

We can describe Gen Ys in four positive ways:

- A generation that is confident, self-sufficient, and achievement oriented
- A generation that is the most education-minded in history
- A generation paving the way to a more open, tolerant society
- A socially conscious generation, leading a new wave of volunteerism

They exude confidence and prefer informality. They have high expectations, and are accomplishment oriented. With their tech-savvy skills, they are poised to be lifelong learners. Add their ability to be great team players, and the future looks extremely promising in their hands.

Gen Ys Learn Best by Collaboration

Gen Ys live in a global society where everyone is on the same, flat-playing field, sharing information and solutions to produce outcomes. Gen Ys are output oriented, success oriented, and achievement oriented. As teachers, they are also student-achievement oriented. They are devoted to helping their students learn more because they are oriented toward producing outcomes. We can nurture that skill by allowing them to produce results in groups.

Giving each new Gen Y teacher a mentor on a one-to-one relationship is contrary to a generation of teachers who learn and produce in a group environment. They can inquire and think circles around us when it comes to collecting data, finding resources, thinking deeply, problem solving, reflecting, and inquiring.

Surround Gen Y teachers with a community of creative thinkers and the solutions will abound everywhere. They are a generation of great team players. By channeling their talent for working together, we will see improved student learning. Education is a collaborative endeavor. No one individual has all the answers. We depend on each other for the creative solutions to our problems and the collective inspiration to design lessons that will improve student learning.

Gen Ys like structure and will want schools to give them clear rules and procedures to follow. They need to clearly see the value of their work. They want their work to be relevant, have impact, and offer them a diversity of experiences.

Gen Y teachers want to be involved in a collaborative way. Induction programs provide that connection, because they are structured around a learning community whereby new and veteran teachers treat each other with respect and all contributions are valued.

Gen Ys are receptive to the wisdom of older, seasoned teachers. They crave the guidance of knowledgeable, confident administrators and co-workers. They also want their valuable contributions appreciated—they want their ideas to be heard by expert listeners. Gen Ys are not only outside-the-box thinkers; they are innovative over-the-wall doers who won't settle for one-size-fits-all thinking.

This next generation of teachers is the most intelligent, talented, competitive (and compulsive) group this country has seen. It's a Renaissance generation with great potential if we put the future in their care. They are more interesting, more confident, less hidebound and uptight, better educated, more creative, and even unafraid. **The grandeur of the future is in their capable hands.**