## Skills and Qualities of an Effective Instructor

### Ability to Work Well with Alternative Education Youth
- **Have prior experience working with youth in alternative education settings.** It is important to understand what students are going through and to talk to them about issues important to them.
- **Maintain student confidentiality** as appropriate.
- **Show respect** for students and establish rapport with them.
- **Appreciate** students’ individuality.
- **Practice “tough love.”** Support students while remaining firm as an authority figure who enforces rules, has clear expectations and follows through with appropriate consequences.
- **Accept the students where they are.** Do not push them too hard to change, do not “preach” to them nor force one’s own thoughts and opinions on them.
- **Have high expectations of students.** Students tend to rise to a higher level of achievement if they are expected to improve and encouraged to do so with compassion and pragmatism.
- **Provide positive reinforcement.** AEP students respond well to being recognized for their achievements.
- **Elevate or advance students who are doing well** to positions with greater status, privilege and responsibility (e.g., allow long-term students to lead parts of classes or to substitute when the instructor is absent—with school staff in the room.)
- **Be flexible.** Change lesson plans as needed and provide repetition to meet the special education needs of AEP students.
- **Demonstrate consistency in the classroom.** Maintain a structure that remains the same over time (e.g. routines the students can count on such as bowing in, not stepping on mats, etc.)
- **Help students personalize what they’re learning** by drawing connections between teaching and real life and telling humanizing stories that youth will relate to.
- **Help students set goals and support them in achieving them.** Find and use appropriate incentives to support students’ pursuit of their goals.

### Personality Characteristics
- **Have a sense of humor,** light-heartedness, and positive outlook on life.
- **Have patience,** perspective and the ability to not take things personally.
- **Demonstrate consistency, predictability and reliability.** This means showing up on time and committing to teach for the full quarter or semester.
- **Be available** to students outside of class (i.e. meet with individual students if needed.)
- **Live what you teach.** Lead by example and be a good role model.
- **Exhibit creativity** and inquisitiveness.
- **Demonstrate empathy,** caring and attentiveness.
- **Be non-judgmental,** listen well and remain open to questions.
- **Have a strong sense of self,** be honest with students and have good personal boundaries.

### Martial Arts or Yoga Experience
- **Break the lesson into small steps** when working with different abilities and skill levels.
- **Be passionate** for the discipline.
- **Be highly competent** and confident in your ability in the discipline.
- **Have experience teaching the discipline.** While novices sometimes do well with youth (they are younger and may build easy rapport with youth), it is best to have someone who is more seasoned and able to handle alternative education youth.
- **Demonstrate the discipline** to students to establish your credibility and authority; it also gives them an example of what to strive for.
- **Convey the ethical and philosophical aspects** of the discipline and guide the students in practicing these principles in class and outside of class.