The purpose of this project was to investigate what top-rated instructors do to learn more about effective instructional practices. We identified highly rated instructors using student mid-course and end-of-course evaluations.

We explored instructor-student interactions for 10 instructors across 5 courses, looking into content and quality of notes from the instructor, instructor profile page, involvement and nature of interactions on course discussion boards, announcements, and grading feedback.

Highly rated instructors seemed to give special effort to connect and support their students, which was shown in the following ways:

**Participating Meaningfully and Actively on Discussion Boards.**
Top-performing instructors were often very involved in discussion boards, starting discussion boards, replying to student comments, and invigorating discussions with new ideas and directions. A teacher’s presence in discussion boards may help students feel like the instructor cares about their posts, and may feel more connected to the instructor through the frequent interactions.

**Giving Informative, Encouraging, and Personal Announcements.**
Top-performing instructors often used announcements each week to remind students of that week’s assignments, how assignments would be graded, what the instructor would be looking for in each assignment when grading, and what the instructor hoped students would get from the week’s assignments. These announcements were personalized and more than a review of upcoming course activities. Announcements were used in a way to show students that a real human being was involved with them in the learning experience.

**Providing Prompt Feedback and Grading on Assignments.**
Top-performing instructors also provided prompt feedback on assignments. Students tend to get frustrated when an instructor does not provide prompt feedback on assignments. Regular, timely feedback provides just-in-time information that validates students’ success in learning and suggests corrections in areas to be improved.

These three themes echo a statement from President Monson: “The teachers I remember best are the teachers who knew, loved, and cared about their students” (Ensign, March 2016). While these themes were common among highly rated instructors, they are not the single formula for success. Truly, the most important quality exhibited by the high rated instructors was that they actively cared about their students.