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Robyn R. Jackson

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To my grandparents, Dorothy L. Colbert-Blake, Robert T. Colbert Sr.,

Grace E. Jackson, and the late John F. Jackson II, who never

had the opportunities I now enjoy.

Thank you all for your sacrifice and your

lavish, unfettered love.

NEVER WORK harder THAN your students

& OTHER PRINCIPLES OF GREAT TEACHING

PREFACE

The Gift

I loved being in Dr. Benn's English 301 class. Sure, we were learning pretty boring stuff—past participles, nominative predicates, and the like; but, something about the way he parsed a sentence seemed, well, *profound*. It was as if he were unlocking the very secret of language itself. I'm not kidding. We would sit in his class in rapt attention for 90 minutes straight. Sometimes, I think I even forgot to breathe.

It wasn't just the way he explained some obscure phrase in a poem that did it. No. He made us feel *smart*. He had a way of asking questions that led us to the discovery of the answer ourselves. Years later, I realize that he was using Socratic questioning; but, as a college freshman, I just thought he had it. He had the gift.

*

Five minutes into talking to Sarah and I knew she had "the gift." It was more than just her enthusiasm—I'd seen that plenty of times before. It was that she literally vibrated with a love for teaching. I watched her eyes light up as she shared how she got to know each of her students individually and learned to tailor her instruction to their needs. Her voice quivered with excitement as she talked about the growth her students made by the end of the year. The interview went on for 20 more minutes, but I had already decided to hire Sarah. She had the gift.

*

From the moment I entered Laura's classroom, I was excited. It was contagious. At first, I couldn't understand why. It seemed like a typical history class—she was showing slides of the artwork of the Renaissance—but something was different. I watched as she put the next slide on the screen. As if on cue, students jumped out of their seats to hold an 8.5 x 11 inch white board up to the screen and highlight what they noticed about the picture. They were explaining to the class how what they noticed indicated something about the Renaissance—the society, the social norms, the way of thinking. The students were having excited discussions about the influence of the Renaissance on modern thought and making comparisons between the Italian and English versions of the Renaissance. Laura asked a few probing questions and changed the slides every so often, but she largely remained quiet and let the students drive the discussion. She has it, I thought to myself as I left the classroom. She had the gift.

*

If you asked me to define "the gift" back then, I wouldn't have been able to do it. I just knew it when I saw it. I'd walk into a classroom and see a teacher completely engaging a class full of squirmy 9th graders and I knew that teacher had "the gift." I'd read a book written by one of those master teachers, those legendary ones who make you want to be a teacher yourself, and I wanted to touch the hem of that teacher's garment to see if it rubbed off on me. The gift.

When I first became an educational consultant and worked with districts to improve the quality of teaching in their schools, I began to wonder if the mythology surrounding teaching was true. What if "the gift" really was some innate talent, some rare, mysterious, divine endowment? What if it couldn't be taught? If so, I was in the wrong business.

Clearly there are some people who are born with it. They have a natural propensity to be master teachers. But, is there hope for those of us who

weren't so lucky? If "the gift" were something that was bestowed upon the blessed few, what, I wondered, would become of the rest of us?

But, after years of working with teachers and school leaders, I now know that "the gift" is not some mysterious birthright. In fact, it's not really a gift at all. Being a master teacher is the result of a critical understanding of the principles of good teaching. It's a mindset that anyone can learn and by learning this mindset, you too can become a master teacher. True, some people come by this mindset naturally, but the rest of us can develop it too.

This book will show you how.

My Story

When I first started teaching, I applied all the theories I had learned in my methods classes to my students. I didn't smile at them for the first month. I wrote lesson plans every day. I faithfully followed the book. I used proximity when they were talking out of turn and followed that up with a rigid set of consequences. I posted and enforced my classroom rules—all 10 of them. I created elaborate differentiated lessons designed to tap into each student's learning style and multiple intelligences. I used technology. I used collaborative learning, cooperative instruction, inquiry-based learning, multiculturalism, you name it. But, it wasn't working. They, and I, were simply going through the motions.

The problem, I thought, was that I needed new strategies. So, I expanded my repertoire. Sometimes the strategies worked, sometimes they didn't. Either way, I was working awfully hard. In fact, not only was I working much harder than my students, I was starting to see diminishing returns.

The assignment I was so excited about, the one that took me two weeks to plan and prepare for, didn't excite my students as much as I had hoped. That really cool strategy I picked up at a conference didn't work as well as the presenter had promised. Although I was acquiring a large repertoire of skills according to the textbooks and my evaluators, I wasn't seeing the payoff in the classroom. My students still struggled, they were still bored, and to be honest, I wasn't sure that they were learning anything.

Finally, I decided that perhaps I just needed more time, smarter students, more supportive families, stronger leadership, and more money. But, after

beating my head against *that* brick wall for a while, I realized that I had better chances of winning the lottery—and I don't play the lottery.

Still, I knew that there was a fundamental difference between much of what I was taught to believe about teaching and what I was experiencing in the classroom. So, I spent the next year reading everything I could get my hands on. I pored through books about teaching. When I heard of school districts or teachers somewhere making a difference, I called them and grilled them on what they were doing that worked. If I read a really good research article about teaching, I hunted down the author and asked follow-up questions. I attended conferences. I observed successful teachers and tried to uncover their secrets.

Then, I tried out what I was learning on my students. I raised my expectations. I started an online community to help build my students' capacity and independence. I created tiered assignments. I looked at the data. I took them on trips to expand their experience. I even baked them cookies if they registered to take the AP exam in the spring. Sometimes, these things worked really well. Other times, at least I did no harm.

What I eventually learned was that there was no magic in the strategy. It wasn't so much what I did that made a difference, it was how I thought. I started to ask myself why certain techniques worked and others didn't. I soon noticed that when a strategy was wildly successful, it had more to do with the fact that I honored a principle than the strategy itself. When a strategy was less successful, that too could be directly related to a principle I violated. Almost without realizing it, I was slowly incorporating principles of effective instruction into my practice.

As I began to pay attention to the principles rather than the strategies, I noticed a powerful shift in the way that I thought about teaching. Before, teaching for me had been a matter of applying the right strategy in the right way at the right time. As I studied effective teaching, however, I began to focus less on what strategy or technique I would use, and more on why I was doing what I was doing. Instead of trying to acquire more or better strategies, I worked on understanding the principles that undergird good teaching.

Paying attention to the principles also forced me to look at my disposition toward teaching and my students. I realized that much of what I was doing in the classroom was designed to serve my own ego needs rather than help my students learn. I wanted my students to do well because their doing

well meant that I was a good teacher. I wanted my students to grow up to be famous and give Oscar acceptance speeches that ended with, "And it was all because of Dr. Jackson. She turned my life around." I wanted to be the teacher they made a movie about. This is why I was so frustrated because a lesson didn't work or my students didn't achieve as much as I wanted them to. It was about my needs.

Once I understood that the problem wasn't my students—that it had more to do with the way I thought about teaching rather than their inadequacies—I was free to look at my students differently. I shifted my focus from trying to manipulate my students to learn to showing them how to learn and helping them see the value in learning. I moved from trying to find just the right strategy to making sure that I faithfully applied the principles of effective instruction. Concentrating on the principles rather than the strategies and my own ego needs freed me up to actually teach.

As the school year passed, I began to notice radical changes happening in my classroom. Because I no longer used my teaching to meet my own ego needs, I was free to enjoy my students. When they faltered, I didn't take it personally. Instead, I focused on helping them understand why they failed and how to correct their mistakes. My process was messier, but much more successful.

I noticed that my students began to relax. They asked questions and tried to understand not just what we were doing but why it was important. They came to class prepared to do the work and when they were in class, they worked hard. I believe that they could see the shift in me—that now, I was focused on their success. I saw them as fundamentally capable and therefore stopped trying to protect them from the messiness of learning. Learning is frustrating. Mistakes will be made. When they saw me take risks in my teaching they learned that they too were safe to take risks. They learned that learning was the hardest, most demanding, and ultimately, most rewarding thing they could ever do.

It wasn't magic. You wouldn't be able to make a two-hour Hollywood movie about the changes that happened in my classroom. There were days when the messiness of learning was, well, too messy for us. We didn't always arrive at closure by the time the bell rang. There were days that my students and I left the class frustrated. On those days, I would remind myself and them that the frustration was a natural part of learning. I kept coming back

to the principles, and held onto them even when it looked like they weren't working.

It made all the difference in my teaching. Suddenly, I too had the gift.

The Master Teacher Mindset

There are many books out there that break teaching down into discrete behaviors or offer a laundry list of strategies that, if you just try them, will make you a good teacher. This is not one of them. Instead, I believe you don't become a master teacher by simply doing what a master teacher does. You become a master teacher by thinking like a master teacher thinks.

All of us know the facts of teaching. What separates master teachers from the rest of us is that they know how to think about teaching. They have integrated the facts of teaching into their thinking and as a result, they do things automatically. From the outside, it looks like they have the gift. But on the inside, it is simply a matter of rigorously applying a few simple principles to their teaching.

When it comes to good teaching, I think we pay too much attention to the strategies, without fully understanding why those strategies work in the first place. What would happen if we didn't focus on the facts and behaviors of teaching? How much better might our teaching be if we focused on developing a mindset toward teaching instead?

I think that if we did focus on developing our teaching mindset, teaching would become fun again. Rather than worry about the next state-mandated test or the next round of evaluations, we would focus on helping our students understand the magic of a cell or the possibility of the written word, fully confident that no matter what test they faced, they would pass it. If we were to master this mindset, we would stop being batted around by the latest trend and focus instead on what makes the best sense for our students. If we shift our emphasis from what we do to how we think about what we do, it would dramatically alter the way that we diagnose student difficulty, assign homework, design tests, plan lessons, grade work, and see ourselves as teachers. In short, this mindset would take our emphasis off the minutiae of teaching and put it back where it belongs—on our students.

That is my hope for you as you read this book. I believe—and I hope you will come to believe it too—that the gift is not the exclusive domain of a

blessed few. In fact, it isn't really a gift at all. It is instead, a mindset, a disciplined way of thinking about teaching. And, with this mindset, the gift is ours, all of ours, for the taking.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although I would like to think of myself as a painter, creating a masterpiece from nothing more than a blank canvas, some paint, and the vision in my artist's mind, the time has come to admit that I am more of a collage artist. I take scraps of things other people have created and put them together, hoping that the total sum will be greater than its parts. And so, this book is a collage of all the gifts given to me by the very brilliant people in my life.

The master teachers in my life—Cynthia Gill, Tom Gillard, Helen Marshall, Esther Mattox, and Marjorie Richardson—gave me wisdom. Experiencing their classrooms and working alongside them has made me a better teacher.

Any understanding I have of the way schools work and the best way to reach teachers I took from Traci Townsend and Dannette Lartique-Menaker, who started this consulting journey with me many moons ago; Nicole Brown, Dr. Donna Redmond-Jones, and Valda Valbrun who, by being my own personal cohort of experts, keep me grounded professionally; Michael "The Turtle" Zarchin and Erika Huck who taught me how to lead a school; Dr. Frank Stetson and Steve Bedford who trusted me enough to allow me to find my own path as an administrator and teacher; Dr. Genevieve Floyd and John Q. Porter who supported me along the way; and Rasheed Meadows, Sherwin Collete, Linda Ferrell, and Lawrence Pendergast, who remind me all the time what truly visionary leadership is all about.

From Shauna Leung, I took the beginning of an idea. Her question two years ago about what good teachers do became in many ways the genesis for this book. And by playing Spock to my Kirk, Mohamed Ali inspired me to develop the framework of this book around principles rather than strategies.

To even believe that I could write a book, I took courage from Dr. Sara Kajder, who showed me that it could be done; Doug Schiffman, who continues to give me brilliant advice all for the price of a plate of pancakes; my attorney Shawn Wright (who has enough faith in Mindsteps for both of us); and Melissa and Allessandra Bradley-Burns, who convinced me I could do it when I wasn't so sure.

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Together, these marvelous people have given freely to me and, as a result, they are co-creators of the collage of ideas you hold in your hands. In return, I give them all my deepest gratitude.

INTRODUCTION

> As to methods, there may be a million and then some, but principles are few. The man who grasps principles can successfully select his own methods. The man who tries methods, ignoring principles, is sure to have trouble.
>
> *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

I am going to say something scandalous: Just because we went to school for teaching doesn't mean that we come out of school as master teachers. Even if you were a good student in school, it does not mean that you will be a good teacher. The tasks you were asked to do in school are fundamentally different from the day-to-day tasks you are asked to do as a teacher. In fact, most teachers will tell you that although their education courses and their student teaching gave them a good theoretical background, what they really learned about teaching, they learned on the job.

But teaching for many years is not enough to make you a master teacher either. There are some teachers who have been teaching for more than 20 years and still think and behave like novices; other teachers have become master teachers after only a few years of experience. And, the sad truth is

that some of us never become master teachers no matter how many years we've been teaching.

Experience alone does not make you a master teacher any more than practicing scales twice a day makes you a concert pianist. Mastery teaching is not about the time you put in. It's what you do with your time that counts.

You see, mastery teaching requires specific, intentional practice.

That's good news because it means—and this book is built on this very premise—that *anyone can become a master teacher with the right kind of practice*.

This book will help you get that kind of practice. And the more you practice the principles of this book, the more you will begin to think and act like a master teacher. I call this process developing a *master teacher mindset*.

What Is the Master Teacher Mindset?

The master teacher mindset is really a disposition toward teaching. It is a way of thinking about instruction, about students, about learning, and about teaching in general that makes teaching fluid, efficient, and effective.

Many of us think that in order to be a good teacher, we need to have all the answers. We focus our time and energy accumulating strategies and skills, hoping that if we have a big enough bag of tricks, we will be prepared to face whatever happens in the classroom. The master teacher mindset means knowing that having all the answers isn't nearly as important as knowing what questions to ask. It means knowing that if you ask the right question the question itself will lead you to the information that you need to examine in order to find the answer. Good questions reveal what information is relevant, when information is sufficient, and how that information should be used appropriately.

The master teacher mindset also means knowing how to ask students the right questions, the kind of questions that lead to deeper thinking, increased motivation, and more student ownership over their own work. Master teachers spend more time refining their inquiry skills and their own curiosity than they do collecting strategies and skills.

Most of us experience a problem and quickly rush to find a solution. Developing a master teacher mindset means knowing that defining the problem correctly makes it more likely that you will find the appropriate

solution. Master teachers spend more time thinking about why the problem is occurring than they do trying to find solutions. They examine the problem from all sides. The master teacher mindset means being willing to own your own contribution to the problem but at the same time, being reluctant to cast blame on others because you know that casting blame is not nearly as useful as looking for causes. Master teachers are willing to confront the brutal facts of their reality and account for those facts when developing a solution.

The master teacher mindset means not trying to teach like anyone else. Instead, you teach in ways that fit your own style. At the same time, you look for ways to make your teaching style relevant to your students' needs. Master teachers understand that there isn't just one way to teach and that effective teaching can be accomplished in a myriad of ways. They find ways that work for them *and* their students.

At the end of the day, most of us are so exhausted, we just want to go home, wade through the stack of papers we need to grade, plan for the next day, and go to bed. We rarely take the time to meaningfully reflect on our teaching. But with a master teacher mindset, you understand that meaningful reflection is critical to honing and refining your teaching craft. Master teachers take the time to reflect on their teaching in order to expose unwarranted or harmful assumptions they may hold, reveal fallacies in their thinking, illuminate problems, and determine directions for new growth. They see reflection as a necessary part of their day.

Ultimately, master teachers don't just magically develop the master teacher mindset. Teaching requires a vast body of knowledge. We have to know pedagogy, but also must be experts in our subject area or areas. This huge body of knowledge can be an overwhelming hodgepodge of largely disconnected facts, unless we have a system for organizing the information. Master teachers learn how to organize their teaching knowledge into meaningful patterns and from these patterns develop a set of key instructional principles. Their entire instructional practice is governed by this small set of core principles and they rigorously select strategies and teaching approaches based on these principles rather than become enamored with every new strategy or technique that becomes in vogue.

I call these principles the mastery principles and the rest of this book is devoted to helping you learn to apply them to your own teaching practice.

The mastery principles are

1. **Master teachers start where their students are.**
2. **Master teachers know where their students are going.**
3. **Master teachers expect to get their students to their goal.**
4. **Master teachers support their students along the way.**
5. **Master teachers use feedback to help them and their students get better.**
6. **Master teachers focus on quality rather than quantity.**
7. **Master teachers never work harder than their students.**

Master teachers often have a difficult time explaining the decision-making process that makes them masterful in the classroom. They have practiced these principles for so long that much of what they do has become automatic and seems almost natural. In the same way that learning to drive initially requires a lot of conscious effort and attention but eventually becomes so automatic that we rarely think about it, the disciplined practice of the master teacher principles will at first seem very awkward but will soon become automatic. Once you have practiced these principles to the point where they become automatic, it will take very little effort to maintain them.

You may be surprised that none of these principles seems especially earth shattering. They almost seem to be common teaching sense. Most of us know already that we need to set goals or to assess student progress. We learn it the first day in college. It's Teaching 101.

I would venture that most of us will claim we are already abiding by these principles in our daily practice. We already set high expectations for our students. We already try to get our students to do their own work. After all, what teacher will admit "I don't have high expectations for my students," or "I don't provide my students with the supports they will need to be successful"?

So why is it that so many of us still find teaching so challenging? Why is it that we are still not successful with *all* of our students? If the principles are so effective, and if we are already using the principles in our daily practice, why are we still struggling to reach every student, every day?

Here is the crux of *Never Work Harder Than Your Students and Other Principles of Great Teaching*. We all learned these principles in school, but what separates master teachers from the rest of us is that master teachers learned how to use the principles effectively, and rigorously apply these principles

to their teaching. In fact, these principles have become such an integral part of their teaching that master teachers no longer have to consciously think about them. Applying these principles has become a natural response to students' needs.

Wouldn't it be marvelous if good teaching became that natural to all of us? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we no longer had to struggle through every teaching challenge? Wouldn't it be fantastic if we got to the point where we were faced with a teaching challenge and could quickly and automatically figure out how to address it effectively? Wouldn't it be great in short, if we all thought like master teachers?

Many of us for years have been looking for a way to do just that. So, we go back to school and get more degrees, or attend professional development workshops to gain new strategies, or spend our summers taking classes in the latest instructional approach, or read books that promise us "the secret" to improving our teaching.

But the master teacher mindset is not simply a response to good training. We don't go through school and come out automatically thinking like a master teacher. The master teacher mindset develops as a result of systematically taking all that we know about teaching, organizing it into a few governing principles, and rigorously applying these principles to our teaching until they become our spontaneous response to students in the classroom. The more we practice these principles, the more we begin to think like master teachers.

How to Use This Book

If you are a teacher, this book will help you figure out where you are on your journey to becoming a master teacher and how to move from one stage to the next. For staff developers and instructional leaders, this book will help you learn how to support teachers on their journey to becoming master teachers by helping you diagnose where they are on that journey and showing you how to help them reach that next step.

At the end of this introduction is a self-assessment to help you diagnose where you are on your journey toward becoming a master teacher. Take the assessment and give yourself two scores: an overall score to assess where you are on the master teacher trajectory, and an individual score for each principle. You can use your overall score to focus your reading of the chapters

and figure out how you can move to the next level. You can use your score in the individual principle to help you choose which chapters to read first and on which principles you need to spend the majority of your energy.

Chapters 1 through 7 outline each of the principles in more detail and explain how you can begin to practice the principle in your own classroom. Each chapter begins with a vignette that illustrates what most of us were taught about teaching and the challenge that such thinking often presents for teachers. Then, you will be introduced to a principle and the research that explains why the principle is important. The next section, *Practicing the Principle,* gives you concrete advice about how you can integrate the principle into your own practice and provides practical examples of how the principle plays out in the classroom. These strategies are grouped under the heading *Try This.*

Throughout each chapter are sections that address any hesitation you may be feeling by providing you with suggestions for overcoming your resistance. These sections, titled *Yes, but. . .,* provide responses to common objections you may be having as you are reading the chapter. They will help you resolve some of the practical challenges that would otherwise get in the way of your being able to implement the principle.

Each chapter ends with a section entitled *Getting Started,* which summarizes the main steps to applying the principle. You can use these steps to help you focus your thinking on the most important points of the chapter and as a reminder of the ways you can begin to apply the principle in your own classroom. This section also provides concrete steps you can take to move from where you are (as determined by your overall score on the self-assessment) to the next level in the mastery trajectory.

Chapter 8 will take you step-by-step through the process of moving toward becoming a master teacher by systematically applying the master teacher principles to your practice. It helps you develop a viable action plan that you can immediately put into place, discusses the challenges you may face, and provides resources for getting support as you improve your teaching. It can also serve as a great reminder three to six months down the road to help you analyze your progress, tweak your plan, and stay the course. To keep you up to date on the latest resources and to help you extend your thinking once you have finished this book, I have also created a companion website at www.masterteachermindset.com where you can download additional resources.

The pathway to becoming a master teacher is by no means linear; there is more than one pathway to expertise. You may develop expertise in one area and still be at the novice level in another area. Thus, although I think it's best to read each chapter in order, you can figure out in what principle you received the lowest score, flip right to the chapter where that principle is covered, and discover ideas and strategies that will help address your immediate needs. Later, you can move through the rest of the book at a more leisurely pace and see how all of the principles connect.

However you choose to use this book, I hope it will inspire you to take a close look at your teaching, to challenge some of your assumptions about both teaching and the way that students learn, and to adjust your instruction or your instructional leadership so that your students can learn more effectively. Developing a master teacher mindset will change the way you feel about students, about learning, and about teaching in general. Your values will evolve. Your interest in your subject and in teaching will be revived. Your identity as a teacher will expand. In the process, you will rekindle your sense that what you do truly makes a difference in the lives of your students. And most of all, I hope that by reading this book you too will discover for yourself the gift that good teaching really is.

The Mastery Self-Assessment

Mastery cannot be measured in the number of years you've been teaching. It is measured by how well you apply the mastery principles to your teaching. Thus, the first step to moving toward mastery is to assess how well you are currently applying the mastery principles to your own practice by taking the quiz on the following pages. Answer each question as honestly as you can; think not about what you would like to do, but about what you are currently doing in your own practice. There are no right or wrong answers.

Use the scoring sheet on page 22 to keep track of your answers. Next to each number, write your answer to that question in the box provided. When you are finished answering the questions, use the scoring sheet to give yourself two scores. First, calculate an overall score. Then, give yourself an average score for each mastery principle. Your overall score will be between 49 and 196. Your average score for each principle will be between 1 and 4.

1. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
    a. I tend to look at my class as a whole and think of my students in terms of their group characteristics.
    b. I see my class as a group of groups and cluster certain students together.
    c. I see each of my students as individuals.
    d. I pay attention to the individual needs of my students but also notice how those needs and individual characteristics interact in the entire group.

2. Which of the following best represents what you do when you are faced with a new curriculum?
    a. I use the lesson plans included in the curriculum guide.
    b. I figure out how I will cover all of the material in each unit and start creating lesson plans.
    c. I look at the assessment at the end of each unit and back map my plans from there.
    d. I use the assessment to figure out what the need-to-knows are and determine how well students need to know each objective. Then I plan the assessments and learning activities based on each objective.

3. When a student does poorly on a test you think
    a. The student did not study hard enough.
    b. It was a poorly designed test and I will need to make a better one next time.
    c. The student did not understand the material. I will need to remediate so that he or she will do better on the next test.
    d. I need to work with the student more carefully to ensure that he or she does better on the reassessment.

4. When you examine data, you
    a. Consider all available data before making an instructional decision.
    b. Examine only the whole class data before making an instructional decision.

c. Examine both whole class data and individual student data when making an instructional decision.
d. Examine only the data that gives me the best feedback that will help me reach my goals and deliberately ignore the rest when making an instructional decision.

5. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
   a. I am still learning my discipline and I try to stay at least one step ahead of my students.
   b. I understand my discipline well enough to teach it although there are times when I get stumped as to how to explain something to a student.
   c. For the most part I understand my discipline and have more than one way of explaining the major concepts to students.
   d. I understand my discipline and take time not only to explain the concepts and skills to my students but also to show them how to learn my subject on their own.

6. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
   a. I follow the curriculum guide step by step and try to cover everything.
   b. I follow the curriculum guide as well as I can but I realize that I cannot get to everything.
   c. I pick and choose what I want to teach from the curriculum guide and try to cover those things that I think are most important.
   d. I assess the curriculum guide and divide it into those things students absolutely need to know in order to master the learning objectives and those that are nice to know.

7. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
   a. I am working much harder than my students.
   b. I am working somewhat harder than my students.
   c. I am working about as hard as my students.
   d. I am doing my work as the students do their work.

8. When faced with a discipline problem in the classroom, what do you do?
    a. Look for a solution.
    b. Try a variety of solutions to see which one works best.
    c. Think about what may be causing the problem and select a solution that fits the situation.
    d. Look for patterns and develop a solution that will address not only the surface problem, but the underlying causes revealed by the pattern.

9. When you look at the curriculum standards, what is the first thing you do?
    a. Try to figure out how I am going to teach them all in the time I have.
    b. Try to figure out which assignments and activities will best help my students achieve the standards.
    c. Try to figure out what assessments I will use so that I will know when my students have mastered the standards.
    d. Try to figure out whether the standard is asking students to master content or a process.

10. What causes your success or failure in the classroom?
    a. It depends. Some days things go well. Other days, they just don't. You really can never tell how things will go.
    b. It depends on how difficult the teaching task was. If it is an easy teaching task, I am likely to be successful. But, the harder the teaching task, the less likely I am to be successful.
    c. It depends on how good of a teacher I am. When things go well, it is because I am good at that part of teaching. If things go poorly, then it means that I do not have that teaching skill.
    d. It depends on my effort. If things go well, it is because I worked really hard at making sure that things went well. If things go poorly, then it means that I have to work harder to make sure things go better the next time.

11. When you grade students' papers, you
    a. Write a great deal of comments on their papers to point out where they went wrong.
    b. Mark student errors but write few if any comments. The final grade is what matters to students.
    c. Make a few marks and write summary comments at the end to give students an overall assessment of their performance.
    d. Mark student errors and write only comments that will coach students towards better performance next time.

12. When a student seems to misunderstand a concept, you
    a. Press ahead and hope that the student will understand later.
    b. Try to meet with the student after school or during lunch to clear up his confusion.
    c. Give the student an alternate reading or supplementary materials to help clear up his confusion.
    d. Try to understand why the student is getting confused and then work to clear up his confusion.

13. When it comes to homework, you
    a. Assign homework just about every night. I think it is important that students have homework.
    b. Use homework as a way to cover those things I just can't cover in class.
    c. Use homework to help students develop good study habits.
    d. Use homework to provide students with independent practice for those things we have learned in class.

14. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
    a. I keep track of my students' grades. If students wants to know how they are doing in my class, they can ask me or wait for the progress report or the report card.
    b. I keep track of my students' grades but I regularly post their grades online so that they can also keep track of how they are doing.

c. I keep track of my students' grades but I post them regularly and also show students how they can track their own grades and figure out their course average.
d. I keep track of my students' grades but I also require that they track their own data. In fact, analyzing their own achievement data is a part of how we regularly run class.

15. When it comes to "soft" skills such as how to study or organize their notebooks, you
    a. Expect my students to know how to do those things already. It is not my job to teach them how to study or organize their notebooks.
    b. Require that my students use specific skills in my classroom. I give them a quiz on the chapters I assign for homework to make sure that they study and conduct notebook checks to make sure that they keep their notebooks organized.
    c. Show my students how to gain these skills. For instance, I give students a study guide and I have a system for how notebooks should be organized.
    d. First look at how students are studying and organizing their notebooks, and then show them how to improve what they are already doing.

16. When you write objectives, you usually
    a. Try to state them using the wording favored by the district.
    b. Figure out what activities I want my students to complete and list them.
    c. Figure out what concepts or skills I want my students to master.
    d. Figure out what I want students to learn and then how I can communicate that in a way that students will understand.

17. You believe that
    a. All students can achieve at high levels if they have supportive parents, a strong educational foundation, and have the innate intellectual skills they need.
    b. All students can achieve at high levels if they are motivated to do so.

c. All students can achieve at high levels if they are given the proper support in school.
d. All students can achieve at high levels and can actually get even smarter if they are taught how to exert effective effort.

18. After you have graded a set of papers, you
a. Record the grades in my grade book.
b. Record the grades and look to see which students passed and which students failed.
c. Record the grades and get a general sense of how the class is doing as a whole.
d. Record the grades and, based on student performance, figure out how I need to adjust my instruction going forward.

19. When a student has demonstrated that he or she has mastered the objectives of my unit already, you
a. Give the student an A.
b. Ask the student to help some of the other students in the class who haven't gotten it yet.
c. Try to find an enrichment activity for the student that can be done while the rest of the class works through the unit.
d. Take what I am already teaching and introduce more complexity and ambiguity into the concepts and skills to keep the student challenged.

20. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
a. I stick to the curriculum guide.
b. I stick mostly to the curriculum guide but I do include a few assignments that are just for fun.
c. I use the curriculum as a guide but I add in assignments that cover material that I think is important or enjoyable.
d. I choose what I teach based on what assignments will best help my students master the objectives stated in the curriculum guide.

21. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
    a. I try to give my students as much help as I can but sometimes I wonder if I am really doing the work for them.
    b. I try to limit the amount of help I give my students because they are going to have to learn how to learn on their own. They won't have the same supports once they get to the next level.
    c. I try to balance helping my students with teaching them to be independent, but there are some times when my students seem unable to figure things out on their own.
    d. I only give my students just enough help so that they can figure out how to do things on their own.

22. When your students come to class without the "soft" skills that they need to be successful, you
    a. Talk to their counselors to make sure that they are properly placed in my class.
    b. Try to teach students the skills the students need even if it means that I don't always get through my entire curriculum.
    c. Look for ways to help students acquire those skills that are most necessary while trying to get through as much of my curriculum as I can.
    d. Look for ways I can show students how to capitalize on the skills that they do have in order to acquire the skills that they don't have.

23. When it comes to assessments, you
    a. Use the ones included in the curriculum guide.
    b. Write my own usually after I have taught the unit.
    c. Write the assessment after I have planned the unit once I have a sense of what material I will be able to cover.
    d. Write the assessment prior to planning the unit.

24. When you look at data, you
    a. Select which data I will pay attention to. I tend to focus on the data I know and understand and disregard the rest.

b. Look at all of the data but sometimes make excuses for the information that is unfavorable.
c. Average the data. As long as most of the students are doing OK or my averages are high enough, then I am fine.
d. Consider all of the data important and consistently analyze the information in terms of individual student progress rather than averages.

25. During class discussions, your typical response to students' answers can best be described as
a. Praise: I want to encourage them to participate so I praise them even if the answer is not exactly right.
b. Evaluative: I want to encourage them to participate, but I also want them to know when they have given the wrong answer.
c. Corrective: If they give the wrong answer, I want to show them where they went wrong so that they will know how to give a better answer next time.
d. Coaching: If students give the wrong answer, I want them to figure out how to arrive at the right answer.

26. You decide how to help a struggling student
a. Once the student has failed the marking period.
b. Once the student has shown that he or she is failing at the interim report.
c. At the first sign the student is struggling (usually a failed quiz or test).
d. Before the student begins to struggle.

27. When teaching a new skill or concept, you
a. Try to cover it as best I can given the time I have.
b. Make sure that my students know it well enough to pass the test.
c. Make sure that students know it in their sleep.
d. Decide whether students need to know it to the level of automaticity or controlled processing.

28. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
    a. Sometimes I am so busy trying to deal with my students' outside problems that I have a hard time getting to the curriculum I am supposed to teach.
    b. I cannot solve all of my students' problems, so I just ignore them and focus on what I can do in the classroom to help them learn.
    c. I recognize that my students' outside problems do influence what they do in my classroom, so I try to find a balance between helping them solve their problems and mastering the curriculum.
    d. I recognize that it is not my job to solve all of my students' problems, so I focus on finding ways to help them develop the skills they need to solve their own problems.

29. When students do not meet your idea of what makes a good student, you
    a. Question whether the student is motivated.
    b. Question whether the student is academically capable.
    c. Question what I can do to get the student to meet my expectations.
    d. Question whether my expectations fail to consider alternate ways of demonstrating mastery or motivation.

30. You communicate the learning objectives to students by
    a. Posting them on the board each day.
    b. Posting them on the board and reading them to students at the beginning of class.
    c. Posting them on the board, announcing them to students at the beginning of class, and listing them in my syllabus or in letters home to parents.
    d. Posting them in class, explaining them to students either verbally or in writing, and listing them in my syllabus and in parent communications.

31. How would you characterize yourself?
    a. I am an optimist. I believe that all my students will learn.
    b. I am a realist. I know that some students will not learn because of the various constraints they face.

c. I am a pragmatist. I believe that all students can learn, but they may not all be able to learn from me.
d. I am a visionary. I believe that all students can learn and that it is my job to figure out how to best make sure they learn in my class.

32. When you notice that a lesson is not working, you
a. Press on anyway and hope that things will get better.
b. Switch tactics and try something else.
c. Use more explanatory devices or other instructional strategies to help students become engaged and to facilitate more student understanding.
d. Pay attention to the feedback I am getting from students and make adjustments to the lesson to better meet students' learning needs.

33. When planning your lessons, you can predict where students may become confused based on
a. What material seems to have the most explanation in the curriculum guide.
b. What material was confusing to my students in the past.
c. What I know about my subject and the common misconceptions that exist.
d. What I know about my subject and where students are in their conceptual development.

34. In order for students to learn a new skill, you believe that
a. They need to study hard and memorize it.
b. They need to practice it from start to finish so that they can learn the entire process well.
c. They need to build on their emerging skills until they have learned to practice the entire process.
d. They need multiple opportunities to practice parts of the skill over time and master them, as well as opportunities to practice the full-length performance.

35. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
a. I haven't had a chance to establish routines for everything yet.

b. I use routines to keep students in line. I find that if we have routines, students are better behaved.
c. I use routines to help our class go more smoothly and maximize students' time on task. When there are routines, students can spend more time on learning and less time on logistics.
d. I use routines to help students take on more of the work in the classroom.

36. When you reward students, you
    a. Decide on a list of rewards and give them to students when they meet some criteria.
    b. Don't typically reward students. Learning is reward enough.
    c. Try to find rewards that I think will motivate students to keep up the good work.
    d. Pay attention to what students value and find a way to connect what they value to what they should be doing in the classroom.

37. How do you differentiate instruction?
    a. I group my students into high, medium, and low ability groups and plan three different lessons based on students' abilities.
    b. I group my students in high, medium, and low ability groups and plan three different versions of the same lesson.
    c. I focus on planning lessons that accommodate students' multiple intelligences.
    d. I plan one lesson that starts at the standard and make adjustments to that lesson designed to help all students meet or exceed the standard.

38. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
    a. Although I hold very strong beliefs about the value of what I do in the classroom, I am often so overwhelmed or pressed for time that my teaching practice often does not reflect those things that I really believe are important.
    b. I used to hold strong beliefs about the value of what I do in the classroom, but over time and after so many challenges, I am not so sure I believe the same way any more.

c. I still believe in the value of what I do in the classroom although my beliefs are tempered by the reality I face each day.
d. I believe that what I do is important and that belief only grows stronger the more I interact with my students.

39. In your class, an "A" grade means that a student
    a. Is passing my class.
    b. Is smart or potentially gifted.
    c. Has worked hard.
    d. Has mastered the objectives of the course.

40. If a student fails a test, you
    a. Record the grade.
    b. Offer the student extra credit opportunities to make up for the low grade.
    c. Figure out why the student failed and offer remediation.
    d. Institute some corrective action and allow the student the opportunity to retake the test.

41. When you evaluate your lesson plans each year, you
    a. Figure out how I can cover the material better next time.
    b. Figure out how I can combine activities or shorten the amount of time I spend on activities so that I can make better use of my time next time.
    c. Figure out how I can teach the assignments differently and more effectively so that my students can better master the objectives.
    d. Figure out what things I can stop doing so that I have more time to help my students master what is really important.

42. When students do not fulfill their classroom responsibilities, you
    a. Create new rules or responsibilities.
    b. Punish students.
    c. Find a system of rewards to motivate them.
    d. Hold students accountable by applying logical consequences.

43. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
    a. I feel that culture has no place in my curriculum.
    b. I don't change my basic curriculum, but I do try to include material such as stories or interesting facts and acknowledge the contributions from other cultures.
    c. I adjust my curriculum so that it includes multiple cultural perspectives.
    d. I alter my curriculum so that it can capitalize on my students' backgrounds, experiences, and preferences.

44. When creating learning objectives, how do you make them concrete?
    a. I state them in kid-friendly language so that my students can understand them.
    b. I try to figure out what the goal really means and what activities or assignments will best fit each goal.
    c. I try to figure out how the goal will be assessed and make sure that all the assignments and activities I chose are a good match for the objective.
    d. I try to figure out what mastery of the goal will look like and what steps students will have to take in order to achieve mastery.

45. Which of the following statements is most true for you?
    a. I believe that if I have the right strategies and resources, I can handle any teaching task I face.
    b. I believe that there are just some teaching tasks that I am not prepared to handle.
    c. I believe that most teaching tasks can be handled, but some are so difficult that I do not have the time or the resources to handle them effectively.
    d. I believe that there are some teaching tasks that are more difficult than others but that I can handle any teaching task if I realistically assess the situation and maintain unwavering faith that I will prevail.

46. You judge students' progress based on
    a. Their overall average in my class.

b. Their individual grades on tests, quizzes, and assignments.
c. Formative and summative assessment grades.
d. Various data sources such as formative and summative assessments, assignments, class discussions, and performance tasks.

47. What do you do when a student begins to struggle in your class?
a. I tutor the student one-on-one after school or during lunch.
b. I tell the student to come see me after school or during lunch. If the student chooses to come in, I will provide remediation. If not, then the student has chosen to fail.
c. I try to figure out why the student is having difficulty and provide him or her with help both in class and outside of class.
d. I implement a pre-determined intervention designed to quickly get the student back on track.

48. When selecting what assignments you will give to students, the most important factor for you is
a. What I can reasonably accomplish in the time I have.
b. What I enjoy doing and will be enjoyable for my students.
c. What makes the most sense given my students, my own teaching preferences, and the amount of time and resources I have.
d. What will most efficiently and effectively help my students master my learning objectives.

49. If a student is working on an in-class assignment and comes to me for help on a particular question, you
a. Give the student the right answer. I don't want the student to struggle.
b. Tell the student to ask another student or look up the answer.
c. Give the student progressive minimal cues.
d. Show the student how to find the answer himself.

Scoring Sheet

Give yourself one point for every A answer, two points for every B, three points for every C, and four points for every D.

Principle 1		Principle 2		Principle 3		Principle 4		Principle 5		Principle 6		Principle 7		Row Totals
1		2		3		4		5		6		7		
8		9		10		11		12		13		14		
15		16		17		18		19		20		21		
22		23		24		25		26		27		28		
29		30		31		32		33		34		35		
36		37		38		39		40		41		42		
43		44		45		46		47		48		49		
Principle Total		Principle Total		Principle Total		Principle Total		Principle Total		Principle Total		Principle Total		Overall Total
Principle Average		Principle Average		Principle Average		Principle Average		Principle Average		Principle Average		Principle Average		

Give Yourself an Overall Score

177–196 Points: Master Teacher

Good teaching for master teachers is fluid and automatic. They invest most of their time up front on planning and thinking through their teaching situation. Master teachers unpack the standards and set learning goals for students that represent minimum rather than maximum performance. Not only do they make conscious decisions about what students need to know and how well they need to know it, they decide early on what evidence of student mastery they will collect and use this feedback to inform their instructional decisions while helping students move toward reaching their learning targets. They incorporate supports into their instructional practice to catch students before they fail and appropriately balance the work of learning between themselves and their students. They recognize the currencies students bring with them to the classroom and help students use these currencies to acquire classroom capital. At the same time, master teachers base their expectations not on what their students can do, but on what *they* can do to help their students.

138–176 Points: Practitioner

Most veteran teachers score in the practitioner range. They have been teaching for a few years and make conscious choices about what they do in the classroom based on experience. They unpack the standards of their curriculum and have a pretty clear understanding of their learning goals, but they do not always break down these learning goals into concrete steps toward mastery. Practitioners align their assessments and learning activities to their learning goals most of the time and use this feedback to adjust their own instructional practice. However, they may not always provide students with the growth-oriented feedback they need to improve their own performance. Practitioners intervene with struggling students but may not always intervene *before* students begin to fail. And, although they confront the brutal facts of their reality, their faith is based on outside factors rather than on what they can do to change things. While practitioners recognize and appreciate the currencies students bring with them to the classroom, their focus is on helping students acquire new currencies rather than on showing them how to use the currencies they have already. As a result, in their attempts to balance the

work between themselves and the students, they still rescue students when things become too uncomfortable.

98–137 Points: Apprentice

Good teaching for apprentices is based on having the right strategy. They take time to understand curriculum objectives and how they can cover those objectives in the limited time they have. Because apprentices realize that some rules can be broken, they often pick and choose what activities they will use for each unit and decide early on what assessments they will use. However, they do not always use assessment results to inform future instructional decisions. Apprentice teachers make some attempts at differentiating instruction but base their instructional strategies on "high," "on-level," and "low" students rather than on individual student needs. They recognize that students have different abilities and values but attempt to get students to exchange their values for those that are accepted in the classroom. When students do not adopt these values or otherwise do not meet their expectations, apprentices may lose faith and in many cases become disillusioned.

97–49 Points: Novice

There are two types of novices. Some teachers are novices because they have just started teaching and are still learning the ropes. Other novices have actually been teaching for some time, but still approach teaching with a novice mindset. Good teaching for both types of novices requires careful thought and planning. They look for rules or recipes to guide their practice. Many times they are so overwhelmed that they rely on the objectives and activities provided by the curriculum guide without really understanding what they mean. Novices work very hard to get through the curriculum by focusing on coverage and task completion. They have a limited number of explanatory devices and depend on remediation to help students who are very far behind. Novices use assessments to evaluate student performance and often use the tests that come with the curriculum guide. If they do create a test, they typically do so after they have taught the unit. Their understanding of who their students are is based on generalizations and stereotypes and their expectations for students are based on their perceptions of what they believe students can do.

Because of these expectations, novices typically work very hard, doing the lion's share of the work in the classroom.

Give Yourself a Score for Each Principle

Now that you have given yourself an overall score, give yourself a score for each principle. To calculate your score, begin by totaling the number of points in each column of the scoring sheet. Then, divide that number by 7 for your average score. Record your average score for each principle. (For an example of a completed scoring sheet, see p. 217.)

1

Start Where Your Students Are

> All learners construct knowledge from an inner scaffolding of their individual and social experiences, emotions, will, aptitudes, beliefs, values, self-awareness, purpose, and more. In other words, if you are learning in a classroom, what you understand is determined by how you understand things, who you are, and what you already know as much as by what is covered, and how and by whom it is delivered.
>
> *Peter Senge*

I was teaching an on-level class of 11th grade students. The students who were quiet, polite, obedient, and respectful were my favorites, regardless of how they performed in the class. They were what I considered "good students."

Keisha, on the other hand, was not what I considered a good student. She was loud. Her work, when she turned it in, was sloppy. She came to class late and rarely had anything to contribute to the discussion. At first, I tried to believe in her. I encouraged her and told her "you can do it." I gave her extensions on her assignments and invited her to come in at lunch for extra help. I worked hard to believe in her and did my best to treat her as if she had great potential.

But, to be honest, I didn't see any potential in her and I was getting tired of trying. Every day in class was a battle. I'd ask her to take out her pencil and get to work and she'd cross her arms and stare out the window. Some days, I would push it, cajole or order her to do her work and the exchange would erupt into a battle. Many days things got so bad that I would end up sending her to the office. Other days, I have to admit, I just didn't feel like fighting. If she wanted to fail, I wasn't going to get in her way.

One day, in the midst of one of our battles, she yelled, "I hate you!" And, to be honest, I couldn't stand her either.

It had come to that.

I realize now that because I had difficulty handling Keisha, I looked at her in terms of her deficits rather than her strengths. She did not fit my image of a good student so I expected her to fail. More importantly, because I had difficulty reaching her, I blamed her. If I were really honest, I didn't like Keisha because she didn't swoon over my lessons. I had worked hard on those lessons and was working very hard to teach her what I thought was a valuable skill. After all the work I'd done, she sat there with her head on her desk. Surely there must be something wrong with her.

One day, I was complaining about Keisha to Cynthia, one of her other teachers. We both commiserated about her terrible attitude and how hard it was to get her to work. As we talked, I slowly began to realize that although we both had the same view of Keisha and the same challenges with Keisha, we had different results. Keisha did work in Cynthia's class. In fact, Keisha was currently earning a B.

"You know that child is brilliant don't you?" Cynthia commented.

"Yeah," I snorted. "She's so brilliant that she's failing my class."

Cynthia got serious. "I mean it Robyn. That girl is brilliant."

I looked at Cynthia incredulously. "Brilliant? Are you kidding me? She doesn't do work in class. She just sits there during discussions. And the papers she turns in are full of grammatical errors." I was starting to get upset.

"None of that has anything to do with how smart she is," Cynthia replied calmly.

"Of course it does," I began. Then I stopped. Cynthia's words suddenly began to sink in.

"Have you ever had a conversation with her?" Cynthia asked.

I shook my head. "How can I have a conversation with her? She is completely unreasonable. She fights me at every turn."

"Yes. That child can be pretty stubborn and ornery," Cynthia said, smiling warmly. "But you really should try to get to know her."

"Cynthia, I have 130 students. I don't have weeks to spend trying to get to know each one personally. Besides, how does learning her favorite TV show or her favorite band help me get her to do her work?"

"You don't have to take her out to lunch or invite her home for the weekend, you know." Cynthia looked at me, amused. "I am just saying that you need to look beyond how mean or inappropriate or stubborn she is being and pay attention to who she is and what she wants. Keisha acts out because she doesn't have a more appropriate way of getting what she wants. But if you can get beyond that, you will find that she writes really good poetry, and she can out-argue anyone. She has a really good mind. You just have to show her how to use her powers for good instead of evil." Cynthia winked at me.

I thought about what Cynthia said. We had the same student but we saw her in entirely different ways. How was Cynthia able to see beyond Keisha's attitude and uncover her other abilities? And, more important, if Keisha really was as brilliant as Cynthia said she was, why wasn't I seeing it in my classroom?

Common Practice

We all at some time or another have come across a student or two whom we felt we just couldn't reach. In some cases, we've even come up against an entire classroom of students who seemed unmotivated and incapable of learning no matter how hard we tried. We struggled all year to find a way in.

Many textbooks and teacher preparation programs argue that the way in is to get to know your students. They suggest that you do a battery of pre-assessments and getting-to-know-you exercises. While these can be useful, they are not sufficient. Students have their own experiences and therefore present their attributes and abilities in different ways. If you only pre-assess and play getting-to-know-you games, you may be ignoring other powerful components of who they are.

Some teachers recognize that getting-to-know you exercises are not enough to really understand who students are. They realize that students'

cultural backgrounds are also powerful influences on how they learn. Many school systems understand at least superficially the power of culture and therefore require their teachers to take a class on cultural competence. But these classes often amount to little more than heroes, holidays, and "foods of the world" classes where teachers spend six weeks eating their way to an understanding of culture.

The problem with this approach is that it treats culture as if it were a monolithic thing that can be reduced to a list of characteristics and preferences. And, it assumes that our students have only one culture when, in fact, our students—all of us for that matter—are members of several cultures. There is their racial or ethnic culture (e.g. Latino, African-American, Asian), their regional culture (e.g. Southerner, urban, Californian, Midwesterner), their religious culture (e.g. Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jewish), their social culture (e.g. athlete, Goth, egghead, theater kid), and their generational culture. If we spent time trying to understand all the cultural influences that make our students who they are, we would never have time to teach. And, even if we went through the trouble of learning all of the preferences and characteristics of our students' various cultures, how do we use that knowledge to motivate our students or help them learn?

It is undeniable that students' choices and learning preferences are influenced by their various cultures. But, rather than focus on learning superficial information about students or even learning the common attributes of their cultures, it is more important to understand the concept of intellectual and cultural currency, how it is acquired, negotiated, and traded in the classroom, and how you can marshal its power to help students learn.

The Principle

Knowing your students means more than knowing their demographics or test scores. It means recognizing what currency they have and value and then using that currency to help them acquire the capital of the classroom.

The capital of our classrooms is the knowledge and skills that lead to high achievement. It includes both *content knowledge*, like the concept of whole numbers and the effect of the Magna Carta on modern government, and *procedural knowledge*, like how to add and divide whole numbers or how to write a five-paragraph essay. When students acquire classroom capital, they

do well on achievement tests and make good grades. Classroom capital is what we typically associate with intelligence.

However, simply knowing the facts does not ensure success for most students. Several researchers (Polanyi, 1958/1974; Sternberg et al., 2000) suggest that academic success is not based solely on knowing the right answers: it is also based on an entire subset of "tacit knowledge" or "soft skills" that make acquiring the right answers easier. In order to do well on a test, for instance, you need to know more than just the information being tested. You also need to know how to take notes, how to read the textbook, how to study effectively, how to distinguish what information is important, how to answer multiple choice questions, how to eliminate incorrect answers and make educated guesses when you do not know the answer, and how to pace yourself so that you can complete the test in the time allotted. You might need to know how to ask the teacher for help on the information you did not understand, how to identify what it is that you do not know, how to get the notes from another student if you are absent, or how to allot enough time to study.

These soft skills operate as a form of *currency* in the classroom. In fact, any behavior that students use to acquire the knowledge and skills important to your grade level or subject area functions as currency, and this currency is actively negotiated and traded in every classroom interaction. While these soft skills and behaviors are not often made explicit to students, they are crucial in acquiring the capital of the classroom.

We all have preferences for styles of behavior, communication, and relationships. We all have notions of what is worth knowing. These preferences are what we use to impart value to the currencies we use and accept in the classroom. If students behave in a way that we value—if they head their papers properly, for example, or come in for extra help, if they raise their hands before speaking and refrain from talking during the lecture—they are more likely to receive favorable treatment, extra help, high expectations, and access to opportunities. As a result, they are more likely to learn. If students do not have these currencies, they have a much more difficult time acquiring the capital of the classroom.

We all have preferred forms of currency. Suppose you advertise that your house is for sale and I come take a look. I like what I see and declare that I want to buy your house. "Great," you say as you take out the paperwork and prepare to draw up a contract. Meanwhile, I dig into my pocket, pull out a

few shiny beads, some seashells, and a couple of wood carvings, place them on the table, and ask for the keys. How would you react?

What if I told you that in my culture, shiny beads were of tremendous value, the wood carvings were of a sacred nature, and the seashells were our accepted currency? Would you then accept them as a form of payment for your house?

The same type of exchange happens in classrooms each day. We have a capital (knowledge and skills) that we are trying to help our students acquire. Our students have various currencies (knowledge and behaviors) that they bring with them and attempt to use in order to acquire the capital of the classroom. Often however, there is a disconnection between the currency we value and the currency they are spending. Or our students do carry the currency recognized in the classroom but refuse to spend it because they do not find the classroom capital particularly valuable.

This disconnect is to be expected. Just by virtue of being adults, we have preferences for behavior and notions of what is valuable that differ from our students' sense of what is valuable. The trouble comes when we see this disconnect as a sign that our students are somehow deficient because they have currencies and values that are different than our own.

Just because students come to us with alternate forms of intellectual and cultural currency does not mean that they are less capable. It means that they have skills that may be unrecognized in the classroom context and potential that has yet to be developed. Or it might mean that they do not yet see enough value in classroom capital to expend the effort it takes to acquire it. Rather than see them as deficient, we should reshape our approach to instruction so that we capitalize on students' currencies rather than overriding or negating them.

Practicing the Principle

Ultimately, if we want students to be successful in our courses, we have to help them use their currencies to acquire classroom capital. In order to do so, we must first figure out what currencies we are accepting and what currencies our students are spending. Next, we have to determine whether there is a disconnection between the two. If there is, we need to figure out why that disconnection is occurring. There are two possible explanations. One, the

disconnection is occurring because students do not have the currencies we are accepting in the classroom. If that is the case, we need to help students acquire this currency. The other explanation is that students have the currency but refuse to spend it. In this case, we have to help them value the capital of the classroom.

Understand What Currencies You Are Accepting in the Classroom

Most classroom problems have at their root a disconnection between the teacher's preferred form of currency and the students'. Thus, while it is important to understand and respect the students' currencies, you must also understand and respect your own.

As much as we may try, we cannot escape who we are. We have values we bring into the classroom. These values will come across in subtle, and not-so subtle ways, so it is important that you are observant of your students and of yourself. Ask yourself how your values affect the way that you see your students and your role in their lives. Examine how the way you teach is affected by the way you were taught, and develop an awareness of how all of this plays out in the way that you understand your students and the lens through which you see every interaction that takes place in the classroom.

Beliefs and values drive behavior. They have a direct consequence on what we teach, how we teach, and why we teach. Yet, how often do we take time to examine our own beliefs and values? If we are going to help students use their currencies to acquire the capital of the classroom, we must first examine our own beliefs about what is acceptable in the classroom, about what makes a "good student," and about what constitutes learning.

Try This

- Divide a piece of paper into two columns. On one side, list the behaviors and characteristics of your ideal student. What would that student look like? What would that student know? What would that student do? (For example your ideal student might be one who is neatly dressed, comes to class on time, raises his or her hand before speaking, completes the homework nightly, participates actively during classroom discussions, and knows how to read critically.) This list will help you see what currencies you value.

Next, place an asterisk next to each characteristic that is necessary in order to master the objectives of your course or grade level. On the other side, list the characteristics, behaviors, and values of the students in your class. What do your students look like? How do they behave? What do they value? Compare your lists to see what currencies your students are spending and what currencies you value. Where are the similarities? Where is the disconnection? How many of the starred characteristics do your students have already? What can you do to help your students acquire the starred characteristics they don't have already?

- Pay attention to the metaphors you use about teaching. Do you see teaching as gardening, or coaching, or shaping students, or leading students on a journey? These metaphors provide powerful clues about your beliefs about students. If you see teaching as gardening, you see your students as plants to be tended. If you see teaching as coaching, you see your students as players on a team. In one scenario, students are passive and must be coaxed and nurtured in order to grow. In the other scenario, students are more active and need to be guided in order to reach peak performance. By paying attention to our metaphors about teaching, we will be more aware of our own beliefs and values and how they influence the way we see our role as teachers, and the way that we currently approach instruction.
- Now ask your students to create similes for learning by having them complete the following sentence: "Learning is like. . . ." Examine your students' metaphors and see how they are similar to and different from your own.

Understand What Currencies Your Students Are Currently Spending

Not only do we need to understand what currencies we value, we need to pay attention to what currencies our students bring with them. Their academic performance will help paint part of the picture, but in order to discover what soft skills students possess and whether or not they are using them effectively, we need to look beyond test scores and grades.

William Sedlacek's (2004) research offers us a useful lens through which we can start to recognize and capitalize on the various currencies students bring to the classroom. In his book *Beyond the Big Test,* he argues that students have noncognitive characteristics and skills that are more predictive of

academic success than the traditional measures of intelligence. Standardized tests and prior grades offer only a limited view of a student's potential.

Yes, but... can't I just use what I know about students' backgrounds and cultures already?

The danger in this approach is that it may result in subtle forms of stereotyping. Although there are cultural guidelines that exist that might help you develop an entry point into students' lives, you cannot rely on these stereotypes in order to see your students. Instead, observe your students. Listen, really listen, to them and try to understand what they bring to the table. We tend to think that we must immediately have the answers. When our students exhibit certain behaviors in the classroom, we immediately jump to an explanation of the behaviors. This principle asks that you take a step back and not jump to a conclusion. Rather, take your time to look for ways to help students capitalize on their abilities and potential in order to acquire the capital of the classroom.

Dr. Sedlacek found eight noncognitive characteristics that are predictive of academic success in college.

- *Positive self-concept*: The confidence that leads to the determination to succeed.
- *Realistic self-appraisal*: The ability to accurately assess your own strengths and weaknesses and to use this assessment to further your own development.
- *Successful navigation of the system*: Knowing how to access resources and how to use the system to help you achieve your goals.
- *Preference for long-term goals*: Knowing how to set and achieve long-term goals, delay gratification, and persevere in spite of obstacles.
- *Availability of a strong support person:* Finding someone to confer advice, particularly in times of crisis.
- *Leadership experience:* Having the ability to organize and influence others.
- *Community involvement*: Being involved in a community.

- *Knowledge acquired in and about a field*: Having the explicit and implicit knowledge of a particular field of study.

These eight variables offer us a way to see and value students' currencies that may otherwise go unrecognized in the classroom.

Recognizing the array of strengths students bring with them to the classroom gives you a starting point from which you can help students acquire classroom capital. If you see a student with a positive self-concept, for example, you can help her use her confidence to persevere on more difficult tasks. If you have a student who demonstrates a realistic appraisal of his strengths and weaknesses, you can show him how to use this appraisal to set attainable learning goals and be more strategic about how he studies. If a student has leadership experience, you can show that student how to use it to form study groups or to take on more responsibility during classroom routines.

When you actively look for evidence of alternate currencies, you can show students how to use the currencies they have to acquire the capital of the classroom. And, by showing them that you recognize their strengths, you can challenge them to reach beyond their natural limits.

Try This

- Use the eight noncognitive characteristics to discover what currencies your students already bring with them. Discuss these characteristics with students and help them see what characteristics they have already and how these characteristics will help them do well in your class. Look for ways to help students develop the characteristics in which they are not strong. For instance, if students need help in leadership, find informal leadership opportunities for them within the classroom, such as facilitating a class discussion, being in charge of caring for the class pet, or being the group leader during a small group project.
- Use parent conferences to learn more about your students. Ask parents to talk about their students' strengths, talents, likes, and dislikes and use this information to provide students with opportunities to use their talents and preferences to acquire the capital of the classroom. If you cannot accomplish this during parent conferences, send home a questionnaire for parents to complete.

- Create opportunities for students to share their own stories as a way of not only learning more about students but also making the curriculum more relevant. When giving an example in class, ask students if they have ever had a similar experience. When teaching a new concept, ask students to explain how that concept might play out in their own communities or might be relevant to their own lives. Have informal conversations with students in and outside of the classroom where you ask students to share their stories.
- Use the "artifact bag" exercise suggested by Jonathan Saphier and Robert Gower (1997) as a way of learning more about your students and creating a classroom culture that welcomes and values students' various currencies. Have students bring in an unlabeled shopping bag containing five items that represent something about their lives or their interests. At various intervals during the first month of the year, have a student select a bag at random and display the items one at a time. After the fifth item is shown, ask the class to make a collective guess as to its owner. Then, ask the bag's owner to explain the significance of each item.
- Use information, illustrations, and examples from students' cultures when teaching the principles, theories, and concepts of your course or discipline.

Help Students Acquire Additional Currencies

In addition to recognizing the different forms of currencies students bring to the classroom, we also need to identify what currencies students don't have. From there, we can help students acquire additional currencies that will help them be more successful in the classroom.

When I first was introduced to Dr. Sedlacek's (2004) research, I lamented that my students didn't have many of the noncognitive skills they needed to be successful. Many of them didn't have strong support systems available to them. Most of them had no preference for long-term goals and would easily give up. Few if any of my students had a realistic understanding of their strengths or where they needed to grow. If these eight skills were necessary for student success, I thought, then my kids were in trouble.

So, I decided that if these skills were crucial, and if my students didn't come to me with them already, it was my job to help them develop these skills during the semester they were with me. I looked at how my classroom was currently structured and decided to radically overhaul what I was doing so

that my students could not only master the objectives of my course but also develop the skills they needed to be successful in my class and in school in general.

I began by forming student study groups as a way of giving students a strong support system inside the classroom. These study groups met once a week outside of class (either in person during the school day or after school, or virtually in online chat rooms I set up for just that purpose). If a student was absent from class, he didn't check with me to see what work they missed, he checked with his study groups. If a student struggled with a concept, she went to her study group for help.

I also restructured my assignments to make many of them long-term assignments as a way of helping students learn to successfully set and work toward long-term goals. At first, I broke the assignments into smaller parts and set up several checkpoints along the way to help students stick with the project to the end. As the year progressed, I had students break the long-term assignments down and set up checkpoints for themselves so that by the end of the year, I gave the assignment and the students did the work of breaking it down into manageable parts. In that way, I helped students learn how to set and achieve long-term goals.

To help students develop a more realistic understanding of their own strengths and areas for growth, I adjusted the way that I provided them with feedback (for more on this, see Chapter 5) and gave them grade tracking sheets so that they could track their progress toward mastery of the objectives. I met with students regularly to discuss their progress toward the learning targets and to help them figure out what adjustments they needed to make in order to reach those learning targets.

It took some work but by the end of the semester, my students had developed many of the noncognitive skills they needed. And, because these skills were not bound by my subject matter, they could transfer these skills to other courses and subjects.

Try This

- Find out what necessary currencies your students are missing (use the list of eight noncognitive skills as a starting point). Then look for ways that you can help students acquire these currencies while doing the normal work of your classroom.

- Explicitly teach the academic vocabulary of your discipline or grade level as a way of helping students better access the curriculum.
- Set up student study groups as a way of helping students learn from each other and develop strong support systems within your class. For more information on how to set up study groups, visit my Web site at www.masterteachermindset.com.
- Project students into examples as a way of helping them relate to things with which they have had no direct experience. Use phrases like "Suppose you were…" "Imagine yourself…" or "What would you do if…?"
- Help students personalize learning goals by asking them to take the learning objective and identify what specific knowledge implied in the learning goal is of particular interest to them.
- When introducing new material with which students are completely unfamiliar, spend some time early on giving background information and creating context so that students can acquire some of the unstated or implied understandings of the topic.

Show Students How to Carry and Spend Multiple Currencies

It is important however, to be careful that in the process of helping students acquire other currencies you don't cheapen the currencies they already have. How do you avoid imposing your idea of what is valuable on the students and thus devaluing the currency that they bring to the classroom?

You teach students to carry more than one type of currency. Students naturally do this anyway. As Judith Rich Harris (1998) points out in her book *The Nurture Assumption*, children often act differently at school than they do at home. In fact, they are experts at adapting their behavior to their contexts.

When I first became an English teacher, I was told that one of my biggest challenges would be to help my students abandon their slang and learn to use "proper English." I went about my task with almost religious zeal, correcting every "ain't" and "don't got" with a holy conviction. I insisted that my students use "the King's English."

Of course, when I wasn't teaching, I occasionally slipped in an "ain't" or two. In fact, when I talked with my friends, I rarely spoke the "proper" English I was imposing on my students.

One day I was in my office during a lunch period working with a student. The phone on my desk rang and I excused myself for a moment to answer

the call. It was my sister and we were trying to make arrangements for getting together later that day. I chatted with her for a few moments and hung up the phone. "I'm sorry about that," I apologized as I returned to my student. He just sat there and grinned at me.

"What?" I asked, as I eyed him suspiciously.

"I knew it!" he exclaimed and began to laugh. "I knew you didn't talk like that when you weren't in the classroom."

And he was right. I didn't. Among my friends and in my neighborhood, I used a very different dialect than when I was in front of my students, or on a job interview, or interacting with my supervisors, or conducting a workshop. If I didn't use the same dialect all the time, why was I demanding that my kids did?

Yes, but... doesn't this just make it OK for students to use nonstandard grammar? And, doesn't that just handicap them from doing well on the tests?

Am I excusing nonstandard English and saying that students should be allowed to only trade in their preferred form of currency? Of course not. Doing so would handicap students by limiting their opportunities in education and their mobility in society. But just because standard English is the language of the tests does not mean it is the language of students' lives. It is not an either/or situation. Rather, it is a matter of giving students more options by giving them multiple currencies and showing students how to use the most appropriate currency in each situation they face.

It was then that I began to introduce to my students the concept of bidialectalism. We talked about how English had several different dialects. I asked my students how they spoke at home. Some used a patois of English and their country's language. Others used a variation of slang. Still others didn't speak English at home at all. I asked them what would happen if they went into their neighborhoods and spoke "proper." They laughed.

"I might get robbed," shouted one.

"Man, no one would know what I was talking about," offered another.

We laughed at the idea of walking up to a group of guys hanging out on the corner and saying, "Pardon me, but do you have any Grey Poupon?"

"What about clothes?" I asked. "Can I go into your neighborhood dressed like this?" I indicated my pants suit and heels.

"Heck no!" laughed one of my students. "Not unless you want to be mugged."

"They would think you were a social worker or a probation officer," another one exclaimed.

"You'd be fine in my neighborhood," a third offered. "Everyone dresses like that."

"Not in my neighborhood," a fourth explained. "Women don't wear pants."

"It's the same way in the business world," I explained to my students. "If you don't dress the part and talk the part, you lose your street cred, regardless of the neighborhood you are in, whether that is Southeast or Wall Street."

"How many of you want to go to college and be a business person?" I asked. They all raised their hands. "How many of you want to be rich?" Again, all hands were raised. "Then you are going to have to learn the language of the dominant culture."

Now they were interested. They weren't being told that the way they spoke was "wrong" or to abandon their own culture; they were being given the secrets to a different culture, a culture to which they previously had been denied entry. The message wasn't that by acquiring the capital of the dominant culture, they would somehow become "better" or "smarter." It just meant that they would become more mobile. They would now be able to move freely between cultures.

How empowering is it for students to now be able to spend several types of currency and to know how to determine which currency works in which economy? How much more empowering is it for kids if they feel comfortable moving between and among cultures? And how many more options will they have as a result?

As teachers, we act as navigators of the unfamiliar social and cultural terrains. Our job is to help students acquire multiple forms of currency so that no matter what culture they enter, they have the knowledge and skills they need to move freely in that culture. Rather than try to erase your students' cultures and get them to conform to the dominate culture, look for ways to

help them use their culture as an entry point into the dominant culture. Look for ways to help them become bicultural and to "code switch." Look for ways to value what they bring to the table and yet show them how they can use different currencies to acquire other forms of capital.

Additionally, we need to learn how to code switch ourselves by looking for ways to adjust or even reshape the curriculum to capitalize on students' tacit knowledge, skills, and experiences rather than overriding or negating them. By connecting what we are teaching to students' lives, we not only help students access the curriculum more easily, we honor students' ways of knowing, understanding, and representing information and thus make it more likely that students will learn and retain what we are teaching and interact with the material at a more rigorous level.

Try This

- Early in the school year, ask students to identify at least three areas in which they consider themselves to be "experts." These areas do not have to have anything to do with your subject area or course. Compile a list of classroom experts. Use this list throughout the year to look for opportunities to use students' areas of expertise as a way of explaining a new concept, as an opportunity to invite students to use their expertise to add to whatever it is you are teaching, and as a way to use their knowledge as a launching point for new concepts or skills.
- Model for students the various thinking processes involved in completing a complex task. Explain to students how a task is completed and then ask students to come up with alternative ways to complete the same task. Encourage students to adapt the process to fit their individual learning styles, modalities, and needs.
- Structure your lessons so that students can view issues, events, and concepts through multiple perspectives. For instance, use resources outside the text and de-emphasize the notion that there is one right answer. Have students come up with several answers to a problem or read several perspectives on an issue or event. Or require students to present both the pro and the con arguments on a controversial issue.

Help Students Choose to Spend the Currency They Have

Sometimes students do not have the currencies they need to be successful in the classroom. Other times, students have these currencies but refuse to use them.

There are four factors that influence students' choices to spend their currency in your classroom. The first is whether they think it is important to do well on a particular task. The second is how enjoyable they think doing a particular task will be. The third is how well they think a particular task will help them achieve their goals. And the fourth is what they think doing a particular task might cost them. If students have the currencies you are looking for and refuse to spend them, you will need to address one or more of these factors.

At the root of all of these factors is a question of value. Students will not spend their own currencies if they do not believe that what they will get in exchange is valuable. They'll need to believe that what you are teaching is relevant or worth their effort. There are two ways that you can help students value classroom capital. The first way is to create a classroom community where students can have some ownership over the routines and protocols of the classroom. In this way they will become active participants in the classroom economy and will come to value its capital. The second way is to help students connect what they value to classroom capital. Both ways will be discussed in more detail in the next two sections.

Try This

- Have students come up with their own ways of demonstrating mastery. For instance, after a lesson on scatter plots, have students develop their own scatter plots using something that interests them. One student could create a scatter plot of the batting averages of her favorite baseball players, while another student could make a scatter plot of the various characteristics of his favorite bands.
- Allow students frequent opportunities to discuss among themselves what ideas mean and how they can be applied. This helps students express ideas in their own words and relate what they are learning to what they have learned already.

- Ask students to explain to the class how they arrived at a solution to a problem. Show students that there are multiple ways to solve a problem and help them find a way that works best for them.
- Help students understand how they learn best. Give them an assessment that helps them discover their multiple intelligences or preferred learning modality. Then show them how to use this information to predict the difficulty of assignments that do not match their learning style or preferred modality, how to seek help, and how to adapt their studying, note taking, and even the learning task itself to better meet their learning needs.
- Actively listen to students and demonstrate interest in their lives beyond school. Point out the connection or ask students to connect what they are learning in class to their experiences outside of class.
- In order to find the "hook" for students, look for ways to demonstrate how what students are learning is similar to what they have already learned in the course or to their own experiences. You can also encourage students to create their own hooks by having them create analogies using new concepts and familiar concepts outside of your subject area (e.g. how is the cell like a factory? How is the nuclear arms race like a game of poker?). To make this process a little more concrete, bring a box of common random objects such as an old shoe, a broken toy, a roll of duct tape, an empty soda can, and so forth. Have students randomly select an item from the box and then work in groups to figure out how the new concept you are teaching is like that item (e.g. foreshadowing is like a map because it tells you where you are headed before you get there).

Help Students Value Classroom Capital by Creating a Classroom Community

Walk into Dannette's classroom and it is like walking into another world. The bulletin boards are covered with quotes from everyone from Led Zeppelin to Socrates. There is a picture of John Belushi during his *Animal House* days hanging next to a picture of Audrey Hepburn. Students' artwork and posters from home hang on the walls. There is even a corner of cubbies where students keep their class notes and study materials. In the front of the classroom there is a gong and students walk up to it at seemingly random times and give it a good whack. The class looks up, smiles, and then gets back to work.

During class discussions, students push the desks aside to a back corner and plop down onto bean bag chairs in the center of the room.

One day I walked by her classroom and could hear the students chanting "Eat it! Eat it!" Curious, I stepped in. There, in the middle of the classroom, five students were dangling chocolate covered crickets above their mouths. Surrounding them were other students wearing buttons that declared "I ate a bug." As each student swallowed, the rest of the class erupted in wild cheers and Dannette pinned a button on their shirts.

Why were students in an AP World History class eating bugs? It certainly wasn't part of the curriculum and it seemed almost disruptive to the rest of the class. In fact, it was the kind of thing more appropriate in a frat house than in a high school classroom. Why was she wasting valuable instructional time on something that had no relation to the curriculum and did nothing to prepare students for the test at the end of the year?

"We had just finished studying world cultures and I told my students that in some cultures, they eat bugs. They were so grossed out that I got the idea to bring in some chocolate covered ants and crickets," Dannette explained. "I wanted my students to do something that they didn't think they could do. I wanted them to know that if they could eat a bug, then they could take and pass an AP test."

Dannette created a classroom community. They were not 32 different students any more; they were all a part of the "I Ate a Bug Club."

"We bonded," Dannette said. "I looked at the Marine Corps and I looked at summer camp and I looked at sports teams and I saw how they would take a group of people from different backgrounds with different abilities and make them into a team. Together, that team would do things that seemed impossible to the individual person. These kids have never taken an AP test before and it seems impossible to them at the beginning. But, when they become a team, they encourage each other, they pull for each other. Suddenly, the test doesn't seem as impossible for these kids."

Dannette's classroom is not all fun and games. She doesn't eat bugs one day and play capture the flag the next, nor does she believe that eating a bug alone will help her students pass the AP World History exam at the end of the year. She isn't arguing that eating a bug will somehow magically transform her students into history scholars.

But she is making a powerful argument for using what was important to students to help them acquire what was important to her and to her course. She recognized the huge influence peers had on students at that age, so she used it to help motivate students to meet the rigor of her course. She also changed the context of the classroom. Traditionally, classrooms are set up for individualization. Each student is responsible for his own behavior and learning. They are, in a sense, on their own. But, what would happen, she asked, if collectivism trumped individualism? Challenges that once seemed daunting or even uninteresting when faced alone, suddenly seem possible and desirable when faced as a part of a team.

Dannette used those currencies to help her students meet the challenge of a very rigorous course. She didn't waste time trying to motivate her students to do well. Instead, she created a classroom culture around trying hard and working together to accomplish goals. She then let the students see for themselves that they were capable of doing far more than they thought they were. By starting with currencies that her students valued, she successfully helped students learn to value the classroom capital and work hard to obtain it. As a result, they didn't need her to motivate them; they were motivated themselves because they valued what they were learning.

Yes, but... I don't have time for these kinds of fluffy activities. I have to get through my curriculum.

We often ignore team-building activities because we feel that they detract from our curriculum. But, when used judiciously, these activities can help our students find an entry point to what we are trying to teach them. The key is to make sure that you select these activities with an end in mind, rather than doing them for doing's sake. Use these activities to help you reach a particular curricular goal and they will go a long way toward helping your students buy into what you are trying to teach them and into your class in general.

Try This

- What are the implicit rules of engagement currently in your classroom? I am not talking here of the rules for how students behave that are typically posted on the wall at the beginning of the school year. I am referring to those tacit rules for how discourse takes place in the classroom or those unstated protocols for how things get done. Ask students to identify these "rules of engagement" and discuss ways to make these rules more useful for them. Give students the opportunity to suggest more efficient protocols and procedures and, together, decide how classroom business will be conducted.
- Create interdependence in your classroom by teaching students to use each other as resources. This can be accomplished by reciprocal teaching, jigsaws, study groups, online discussion boards, subject-specific chat rooms, cooperative learning activities, and seeding (teaching some students a skill and then having that small group of students teach the rest of the class).
- Include team-building activities in your curriculum. While these activities are often seen as "fluffy" and unrelated to the curriculum, they actually help create a classroom community that makes students more efficient and interdependent. Team building can also motivate students and help them persevere in the face of difficulty because it creates a sense of "we're all in this together."
- Build in opportunities for students to have some influence or control in what goes on in the classroom. Give students choices about how to complete assignments that best fit their own learning styles, interests, and needs.
- To find ways to help students make connections between the curriculum and their lives, use the following questions suggested by Stephen L. Yelon (1996, pp. 16–17):
    - How will students use the topic in their worlds?
    - How will the topic help students explain their own experiences?
    - How will the topic contribute to or deepen students' current interests?
    - How can the topic help students fulfill their aspirations?
    - How can the topic help alleviate students' fears and concerns?
    - What will students gain if they learn this topic or lose if they do not?
    - What will happen if students use this new skill or knowledge well and what will happen if they do not?

Reward Students in Their Own Currency to Help Them Value Classroom Capital

One of the biggest mistakes we make as teachers is that we assume that our students value classroom capital. As a result, we try to motivate students by rewarding them with things they don't value. Many of us think that the good grade should be enough of a motivation for doing the work. But, for many of our students who have not bought into the economy of our classrooms, good grades mean very little. If we want to motivate students, we have to reward them with currencies they value. Take my friend Cynthia, for example.

One day, I dropped by her classroom to work on a presentation we were giving together at an upcoming conference. Although it was also Cynthia's planning period, she had a handful of students in her classroom making up a test. Her teaching assistant, Ms. Bledsoe, monitored the students while we worked at a table in the back of the classroom.

It wasn't long before our work was interrupted by Ms. Bledsoe's exasperated sigh. "Jesse, I have told you three times already to get to work. Take out your pencil and finish this test."

"I'm finished." Jesse slumped in his seat and put his pencil on the desk.

"You are not finished, Jesse. You still have two pages to go. Now get to work," Ms. Bledsoe admonished.

Jesse threw the test on the floor and got up.

"Excuse me," Cynthia whispered, never taking her eyes off of Jesse. "I'll be right back."

She put a smile on her face and went over to Jesse. "Boy, sit your little self down," she drawled playfully.

Jesse didn't smile, but he did reluctantly sit back in his seat. "Miss Gill, I don't want to do this test. It's boring." He crossed his arms.

Cynthia leaned over Jesse's desk and whispered something to him. He looked up at her quizzically, and she looked him directly in the eye and smiled.

Jesse reached for the test. "I don't have a pencil."

"I've got one right here." Cynthia reached in her pocket and handed Jesse a pencil. "Now hurry up. You only have about 20 minutes."

Jesse got to work.

When Cynthia returned to the table, I whispered, "You're amazing. What on earth did you say to him?"

"Who, Jesse? Chile, I just told him that if he finished his test, I'd make him a peanut butter and jelly sandwich."

I laughed aloud and Cynthia smiled enigmatically. "Don't knock it, honey. It works."

We didn't hear a peep from Jesse for the next 20 minutes. He hunched over his desk and completed his test. When time was up, Jesse brought his test over to Cynthia.

"Did you do your best?" she asked him sternly.

"Yes, Ms. Gill. I even went back over it to check my work."

Cynthia flipped through the test and checked each page. Then, she went to her desk and took out a loaf of bread, a vat of generic peanut butter, a jar of store-brand jelly, and a plastic knife. She made what was perhaps the ugliest peanut butter and jelly sandwich I had ever seen, but to Jesse, it was a work of art. When she finished the sandwich, she handed it to Jesse who cradled it lovingly in the palms of his hands, grinning.

"Thank you, Ms. Gill," he said reverently and carefully made his way to the door. As he left the classroom, we could hear him yell, "Hey Tito, DeMarco. Look what Ms. Gill made me!"

I asked Cynthia once about those peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Why were these kids willing to work so hard for something that seemed so trivial? She used cheap bread and cheaper peanut butter and jelly. The sandwiches she made were positively ugly. What was it about these sandwiches that could get kids motivated when nothing else would? After all, wasn't it just a bribe—the high school equivalent of giving students candy if they finished their work?

"You're focusing on the wrong thing. It's not the sandwich itself that matters. It's the fact that *I* make it for them. Cooking for someone else is one of the most nurturing acts a person can do. These kids don't get enough nurturing at home. Jesse's mother works two jobs. She doesn't have time to make him a sandwich. So, when I make him a sandwich, he feels nurtured and loved. Jesse has to know that I care about him before he will do anything else. When he feels like I care about him, he will do the work."

Cynthia understood the idea of paying kids in their currency. Rather than impose her value system on Jesse, she recognized what currency he was taking and used what worked in his economy.

Yes, but... surely you don't expect me to start making my kids sandwiches!

I am no Cynthia. Although I love to tell the peanut butter sandwich story, I did not go out and immediately buy a loaf of bread and start making sandwiches myself. I am just not that way. But, I got her point. We did, after all, have the same students. My students too needed a certain amount of nurturing in order to be motivated. Most students do.

But, I am not the same kind of nurturer as Cynthia is. If I had gone out and started making sandwiches, I would have been little more than a poor imitation of Cynthia and my students would have seen right through me. I would have come off as false and insincere. No. I had to find a way to nurture my kids that was authentic and that fit with who I was.

Often when we read inspiring stories of great teachers or see a feel-good teacher movie, we want to rush out and do what they do. We grab a bullhorn like Joe Clark, or take them to an amusement park like Michelle Pfeifer did in *Dangerous Minds.* We keep them after class for hours like Jaime Escalante. But we fail to consider whether our students are like those in the movies, or whether we are like those teachers. We want to be like them, sure, but we have to take into account our own personalities. What made Joe Clark or Jaime Escalante so successful was that they found a way to reach their students by being who they were.

Kids are smart. They can see through us. They know when we are being sincere and when we are being "fake." While they may cut us a little slack in the beginning, they will soon begin to rebel against our teacher act if we are not sincere. If we don't believe it, why should they?

So, if making sandwiches is not your thing, figure out what is and do that.

Sure, Jesse should have been motivated by the intrinsic reward of doing well. But, in Jesse's economy, the intrinsic rewards were not nearly as important as that peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

When you start where your students are, you don't think in terms of "should." If you want to motivate students to learn, first find out what currency they are spending (or the currency they value) and pay them in that currency. From there, you can teach them how to find the reward in other things. For

many of our students, intrinsic motivation has to be developed. It comes only after they have experienced the pleasure of doing well and know the rewards of success. At the beginning, many of our students haven't experienced consistent academic success and are not convinced that it will bring any pleasure. In fact, academic success has been a source of pain for them because it has been heretofore an unachievable goal. This is why it is so important to start with what motivates them and then as they experience more success, help them transfer or become motivated by that success.

For some students, it will take grades or points or extra credit. For other students, it will take the promise of some more tangible reward like extra time on the playground or a fieldtrip.

For Jesse, it took a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

Try This

Think about the rewards you currently have in place in your classroom. Are they consistent with what your students value? If not, think about how you can make them more consistent with your students' values. Pay attention to what your students value (or even ask them!). Then, think of how you can reward them in ways that they value.

The Principle in Action

One day, I was doing a formal observation in Chris's 7th grade math class as she was teaching students how to solve quadratic equations.

"How do we solve for x in this equation?" she asked, as she wrote an equation on the overhead projector.

Several students raised their hands. Chris waited a few beats and then called on one student. As the student talked, Chris wrote on the overhead. When the student finished, Chris asked, "Why did you choose to solve the equation the way that you did?"

The student paused for a second and considered his answer. Then he began to explain his reasoning to the class. When he finished, Chris asked the class, "Did anyone use a different way to solve this equation?"

A few students raised their hands. Chris called on a student who explained another way to solve the equation. When the student finished, Chris asked her, "Why did you choose to solve the equation that way?" Again, the student

explained her reasoning. Then Chris asked the class, "Is there another way that you could solve this equation?"

This time, the students were less quick to raise their hands. Chris waited and let them think about her question for a moment. When after several moments no one raised a hand, Chris prompted, "Let's see, you've added, subtracted, multiplied…." Again, Chris waited. Suddenly one student raised his hand. Chris called on him. "You could divide the two sides by six," he offered.

Chris smiled. "Okay, tell me how that would help me solve this equation." The student talked her through the equation as the other students took copious notes. Chris put down the overhead marker for a moment. "We have at least three ways of solving a quadratic equation here," she announced as she pointed to the overhead. She summarized each of the three methods. Then she asked, "Why would I use method one?" The students offered a few answers. Chris nodded her head, and then paused. "Well, are there situations where method two might work better?" The students thought for a moment and then offered a few scenarios. Chris listened and probed with more questions until the students had suggested several different situations where method two might work better than method one. "What about method three?" Again, the students explored the different scenarios.

When the students finished, Chris began to hand out a worksheet. "Now that we have learned how to solve quadratic equations, I want you to practice. This worksheet contains 12 problems. I want you to experiment with the three different methods that we just examined and find which method works best for you."

Chris didn't just teach her students one way to do things. She acknowledged that there were several different ways to solve the problem and allowed students to select the method that worked best for them. She helped them examine each method so that they understood the advantages and disadvantages that each offered and then let them decide based on their own preferences. As a result, Chris honored the currencies and preferences of her students and at the same time, helped them acquire new currencies that they could use to be successful in her classroom.

Getting Started

Help your students use the currencies they bring with them to help them acquire the capital of the classroom.

1. Examine your own currencies. Look to see which currencies you value in the classroom.
2. Pay attention to your students to discover which currencies they value and what currencies they are spending.
3. Look for any disconnect between the currencies you are accepting in the classroom and those the students are spending. Also look for ways that you may be spending currencies that the students do not value.
4. If the disconnection is because the students do not have classroom currency, help students use the currency they have to acquire classroom currency by showing them how their currencies are valuable, helping them acquire additional currencies, and learning how to code switch.
5. If students have classroom currency but refuse to spend it, create a shared classroom community and reward them in currency they value.

Is great teaching a gift that only a few of us are born with, or is it a skill that can be learned?

In *Never Work Harder Than Your Students*, Robyn Jackson makes a radical assertion: Any teacher can become a master teacher by developing a master teacher mindset. The master teacher mindset can be achieved by rigorously applying seven principles to your teaching until they become your automatic response to students in the classroom. The more you practice these principles, the more you begin to think like a master teacher. The seven principles are

1. Start where your students are.
2. Know where your students are going.
3. Expect to get your students to their goal.
4. Support your students along the way.
5. Use feedback to help you and your students get better.
6. Focus on quality rather than quantity.
7. Never work harder than your students.

Using these seven principles, Jackson shows you how to become a master teacher no matter where you are in your practice. Each chapter provides a detailed explanation of one of the mastery principles, the steps you need to take to apply them to your own practice, and suggestions for how you can begin practicing the principle in your classroom right away. Jackson offers stories from her own teaching practice as well as from other teachers she has helped to show you how each principle works. Teaching is a hard job, but using Jackson's principles will help you and your students reap the rich rewards of that hard work.

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the new teacher's companion

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Gini Cunningham

the new teacher's companion

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This book has been printed on environmentally friendly paper.

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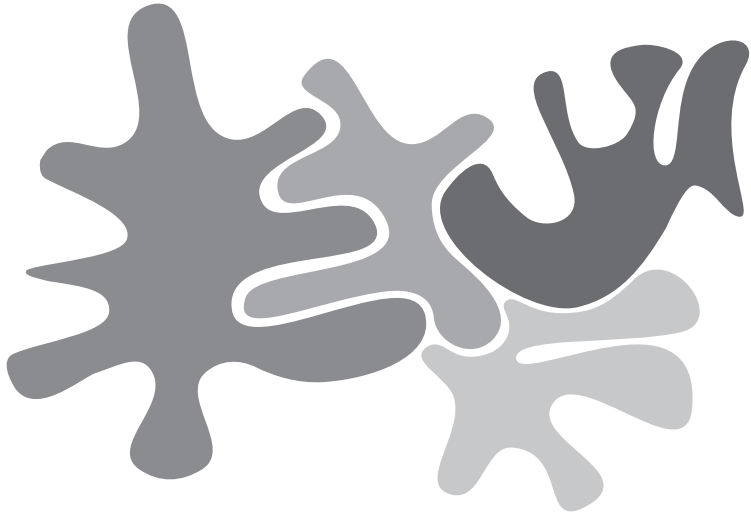
SUCCEEDING IN THE CLASSROOM



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To Lynn—an educator, coach, and
role model of excellence

To TW, Stan, and Allison—my children
who enrich my life daily

the new teacher's companion

PRACTICAL WISDOM FOR SUCCEEDING IN THE CLASSROOM

Foreword

When I was offered my first teaching job in the late 1970s, I was excited to be embarking on the career I had planned for since I was a little girl. As the beginning of the new school year approached, my anticipation and excitement were joined by a heavy sense of the responsibility and lists of requirements of my new teaching job. Although I had gone to an innovative college where I was "prepared" to be a teacher through a four-year practicum-based program with incredible professors and vast amounts of hands-on experience . . . I wasn't ready. No one is. My emotions are still vivid.

I had no idea that as a new teacher, I would cry every day (including weekends) for at least two months. Although I (usually) didn't cry at school, by the time I got to my car—and definitely by the time I got home—I could count on feeling desperate, despondent, and deficient.

Don't misunderstand. I loved being a teacher. I couldn't possibly have put in more time at school and at home to be "ready." I brought my best self to school each day. Yet I felt so alone in what I was doing. Sadly, I had no way of knowing that what I was

experiencing was normal. Needless to say, there was no mentoring program set up for our school district.

I wish I had been able to access a compassionate, clever, and considerate mentor and guide who could provide the tips, tales, tools, and techniques that a novice teacher needs to feel at least a modicum of success day-to-day. All teachers who are beginning in the profession, as well as those switching to a different type of school or school district, need a special someone who can help with

- setting up, maintaining, and managing the classroom;
- getting along with other teachers;
- working with parents;
- planning for an ever-changing and increasingly rigorous curriculum;
- handling the stresses of being under the scrutiny of administrators, parents, other teachers, and of course, the students;
- managing and optimizing time and talents;
- remembering the real reason we chose to become teachers; and
- dealing with the myriad other demands of being an educator in the 21st century.

What new teachers really need is someone who is right there with us, before school, during the school day, after school, and on the weekends. We need to know we can ask questions of this sage advisor, trusting that our questions will be neither seen as silly nor shared with others in the teachers' lounge (or anywhere else). The truth of the matter is, of course, that no school district can provide a 24/7/365 resource person for each new teacher.

All is not lost because now we have this book from master teacher and guide Gini Cunningham. She is the mentor that new teachers need. Every new teacher can benefit from her wisdom any time of the day or night, not just the educators who are fortunate enough to work one-on-one with her.

Gini's book is magical for new teachers for so many reasons. A few of the reasons that you'll discover:

- She tells stories that are real, comforting, and pull you right into the experience.
- Her passion for teaching is communicated tenderly yet eloquently so that every reader is convinced that teaching is the finest profession and is a career selection made with both the heart and mind.
- The practicality of Gini's suggestions is encouraging. Too many books share the tribulations, which seem impossible to surmount to a new teacher, whereas Gini shares realistic tips and successes.
- Whether you need advice on one topic in the middle of the night or an overview of advice in the middle of the afternoon, the book is accessible when you need it. Jump into the pages to find Gini's suggestions and support on numerous critical topics.

I've heard it said that we should have one mentor who is twice our age and one mentor who is half our age. Somehow, with Gini Cunningham, you get both. She has the wisdom that comes only through living and experiencing what life has to offer. She also brings a youth and freshness to her conversations and relationships. These qualities come through in her writing; I don't know anyone else like her.

Every teacher has experienced the pain and trials of the anticipated and dreaded first year of teaching. Given that shared experience, we all know that Gini's advice is needed and more than a welcome addition to the literature and materials weighing down the briefcases, bookshelves, and desks of new teachers. Keep learning with each reading of this book; share it with others who are, work with, or are getting ready to join the ranks of new teachers. Read, learn, and enjoy!

Meggin McIntosh
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More than 50 years of learning are stamped into these pages. Excellent teachers and enlightening coworkers plus thousands of delightful and challenging students have channeled my learning

and love of teaching. Thanks to my first mentors who set me on the road to teaching success, Gail McNeill and Shelley Tronstad; to Arlene Myers, who inspired me with the significance of writing and words; to Rosita Kottke, who exemplifies teaching every student to reach the greatest learning expectations; to Gail Janhunen, who shows me magic in the classroom every day; and to Karen Ash, who has acted as a sounding board and partner as we shared hundreds of adventures with new teachers. I hope that every teacher will be wrapped in the thrill and excitement of educating students, building knowledge, and expanding skills that carry over into lifelong success. No profession can match the wonder of working with young minds.

My children, TW, Stan, and Allison, are tapped into every word. I appreciate the wonder and joy they have brought me, the lessons they have shared with me, and their unique ways of learning and applying knowledge. My husband, Lynn, has provided unwavering faith in me.

Introduction

Courses in college, supervised teaching, and animated discussions with friends only begin to prepare you for actually being a full-time, certified teacher. Every day on the job you will grow and learn from experiences that come from being an instructional leader. Something magical happens when you work with dedicated colleagues and eager students. As the excitement and thrill of teaching escalate, confidence and competence expand. Educating students is filled with challenges and successes that turn a "regular" job into total fulfillment.

Over the years, I've experienced many of these challenges. One of the most memorable occurred when I was teaching physical education at an elementary school. With a sick and weeping student at my side, midway through my effort to mop up a pool of vomit on the floor, I dodged as a chair came hurtling toward my legs. As I shook disinfectant powder on the gooey remains and patted Trina gently on the back, I glared at Willie-the-Chair-Boy. I then calmly asked Paul to dash to the office to get me some help. As things were just about to return to normal, Freddy tripped over Anna, embedding his two new front teeth into her skull.

Anna stumbled toward me with tears in her eyes, and a quick examination of her head revealed why she was crying. Blood was seeping from the head bite, while across the room Freddy was yanking long strands of hair from in between his teeth.

At this exact moment the gym door exploded open and thunder rattled the building. In came a soaking-wet Cindy, the neighborhood dog who adored kids, loved to wander, and detested loud noises. The dog's sudden entrance diverted the attention of all 37 of my 2nd graders, but eventually I gathered the class together to proceed as normally as possible with scooter board hockey, our game of the day.

Such is the start of a day in the life of an elementary physical education teacher, and all of this before 9:00 a.m.! Who could imagine what else might be in store on this day? At lunch, the classroom teachers of my 2nd grade students arrived at my door, with wide-eyed children clutching their hands. "They were worried about you," Mrs. Stevens announced. "It sounds like you had quite a morning!" As if on cue, the youngsters let go of their teachers, ran toward me, and enveloped me with hugs of love.

Is there a more demanding and yet fulfilling profession on earth than teaching? Every day in the classroom brings love and learning. Students and teachers who care about one another and about you are a powerful part of a thrilling career.

The Purpose of This Book

Administrators hire the best teachers they can find for the positions they have available. Some teachers arrive with excellent training and years of experience that make the transition into the new job quite simple. Others enter the classroom as "boss" for the first time. They may be confused, scared, and ill-prepared for the real world of teaching. This book is intended to assist new teachers during the first days, weeks, and months of that crucial first year of teaching, to ensure that they are ready for the challenges of the job, equipped with the background knowledge and support that will maintain their enthusiasm while they

develop the talents that will keep them in the profession for many years to come.

The tips and tales in this book come from my own experience, direct observation, or lessons taught and shared by teachers. Based on years of interaction with hundreds of colleagues and thousands of students, every idea has helped to improve classroom instruction and student learning. Although there is never one perfect answer for every situation, there are definitely guidelines that can help teachers and students succeed while avoiding potential pitfalls. Great teaching from the start of the school year to the end is the result of thorough planning, preparation, and dedication to being the best teacher possible. This book entertains, guides, and supports new teachers as they work to get everything just right.

In many ways, the new teacher launching a career is like a person standing in front of the map in the mall, looking at the big "You Are Here" label. You know where you are, you are fairly sure of how you got there, and now you have hundreds (maybe thousands) of choices and decisions to make as the first year of teaching unfolds and you realize the enormity of the job. New teachers have completed college and all of the requirements, and often teaching has been made to look quite simple. The teacher teaches, the students learn, day one leads to day one hundred, and so on throughout the year. During student teaching, students behaved, colleagues and parents respected teacher expertise, and confidence abounded. Now, on the job, the reality and responsibility of the assignment really hit home.

The Real World of Teaching

The real world of teaching may appear somewhat different than the dream world, especially in the beginning. The new teacher is now in charge of every facet of instruction, plus many other aspects of the job. That is why summer planning and advance preparation are absolutely essential. Administrators are often overwhelmed with the many other demands of running the

school, and although they would like to spend hours in every classroom, that is an impossibility. The guidelines in *The New Teacher's Companion* give new teachers much-needed assistance as they launch their career.

Although teachers may have a kind and caring spouse or significant other, completely supportive children, and newfound, helpful teaching colleagues, when the bell rings and they enter the classroom, they are, in many ways, completely alone. That independence is one of the benefits of teaching, but it can also be extremely frightening. Teaching entails vast responsibility for instruction that supports the growth and development of every learner. Research confirms that the teacher makes the greatest difference in the learning success of students. Can any school or administrator risk not having excellence in every classroom from the outset? Would any teacher wish to be less than fully equipped and qualified for the job?

The most positive starts come from independent preparation, planning, and research on instruction and learning, coupled with discussion and sharing with administrators and colleagues. By reading this book, jotting down notes, determining goals for achievement in learning, and dreaming about making a difference in the lives of children, new teachers set themselves up for success. The teaching profession, overflowing with stress and intense responsibility, packed with hundreds of daily challenges, is neither simple nor easy. But it is richly satisfying. Theory is great for expanding thinking, but practical tips and real-world anecdotes such as those offered in this book are invaluable.

Format and Features

The book is written especially for new teachers who are excitedly preparing for their first job—and also for the administrators who just did the hiring—and the mentors and coworkers who want to make the new teacher's transition smooth. All student

names and some adult names are pseudonyms. All individuals mentioned have greatly influenced my life and my teaching.

Each chapter begins with a brief summary of main ideas and a review of the main points of the preceding chapter, followed by sections titled The Challenge and Lessons Learned, which introduce the new chapter material with real stories as anecdotes. The story at the beginning of this chapter about my 2nd grade physical education class is an example of a challenge and a lesson learned. Sections I think of as true tales, marked with stylized puzzle pieces, are linked to the key points of a chapter and are woven into the text. Teaching is a deeply personal and moving profession, generating an abundance of amazing adventures and remarkable experiences. These stories serve as background information for teachers as they begin to accumulate their own teaching experiences.

The body of the chapter consists of tips and ideas to aid new teachers during the critical first year of the job. In addition to new teachers, administrators will find these tips and ideas to be a handy guide to support new professionals as they strive for teaching excellence—an important task, given the huge turnover of new teachers within the first five years of teaching. Although it is essential to modify and adjust the tips to match individual needs and particular teaching assignments, the essence of each focuses on excellence of instruction and the achievement of all students. Each chapter also has messages marked with a heart that are intended as additional gentle nudges toward excellence. Closing Advice at the end of each chapter summarizes key points and adds final insight. Lists throughout the book provide a handy way to check and double-check understanding and to guide planning and preparation.

At the end of the book is a list of References and Resources to further support learning and extend the knowledge of new teachers. The appendixes provide additional material for planning and preparation.

About the Chapters

Chapters 1 through 4 are intended to assist with initial preparation for teaching, including many tasks to be done before the first student arrives. The topics covered include the following:

- Developing a personal vision, beliefs, and goals for teaching
- Learning about and understanding school and district policies
- Establishing classroom rules that maintain discipline
- Deciding consequences for misbehavior and how they will be administered

Chapters 5 and 6 offer suggestions for organizing the classroom and planning for various procedures. Topics covered include the following:

- Determining appropriate rewards and awards to honor and promote learning
- Designing the layout and organization of the classroom
- Planning for every anticipated classroom procedure
- Organizing textbooks, trade books, instructional materials, and supplies for creating excellent lessons
- Creating seating charts, name tags, and other identifiers to start the year with ease

Chapters 7 through 9 cover topics that focus on the essentials of excellent instruction, including the following:

- Creating lesson plans that are clear, coordinated, and planned for student success
- Integrating daily lessons into unit plans that coordinate and sequence learning
- Understanding time management so that every minute in the classroom is well paced and filled with learning
- Knowing and using student engagement strategies to verify each student's learning and degree of understanding of every lesson component

Chapters 10 and 11 provide additional information for teachers to ensure that students have learned by reiterating the essential question: What do my students really know, and what are they able to do? The teacher uses the answers to this question to determine the following: What do I do now to advance the learning of students who "get it," and how shall I review and reteach for students who do not "get it yet"? Determining the answers to these questions involves the following activities:

- Assessing student learning and understanding, pinpointing misconceptions, and adjusting future lessons to meet student needs
- Creating minilessons to meet student learning needs
- Writing and asking deep-thinking questions to promote understanding
- Generating ways for students to respond to extend knowledge and create independent learners and thinkers
- Grading student work fairly and efficiently with adequate feedback to increase understanding
- Developing students who are able to self-assess and determine the next steps in learning as they move toward becoming independent learners

The book concludes with Chapter 12, a roundup of key ideas and final reminders for teaching excellence.

Teaching is a wonderful adventure. Great administrators want their teachers and students to achieve excellence. Students learn from great teachers, and great teachers continue to learn every day from their students, from research, from colleagues, from experience, and from the drive to reach and teach all the children with whom they work. Keeping in mind that no class, no subject, no student or group of students, and no day is ever

the same, the key ideas in *The New Teacher's Companion* make high-quality instruction possible from the outset. Great teachers really do make a difference. No other profession can compete with the magic of teaching!

1

Teaching—
It's More Than a Job, It's Magic

Ideally, administrators have a vision for each new teacher they hire, characterized by teaching excellence and high levels of student achievement. In turn, new teachers need a clear vision for their teaching plans and the learning success of all students. Acknowledging beliefs about students and learning and establishing goals for student achievement help to refine instructional effort and turn the vision into reality.

By examining personal beliefs and goals and creating a vision, teachers clarify where they are headed so that they can efficiently design how to get there. This self-analysis and additional discussion with colleagues and administrators solidify the vision while creating positive school relationships.

The Challenge

I was loading cases of pop for the vending machine onto a cart in the tiny storage room when the disaster occurred. As I pulled one of the cartons down from the high stack, it ripped open, and soon one falling can led to another until soda was spewing

everywhere around the room, dripping off the ceiling, dribbling down the walls, and puddling across the floor. There I stood, Dr Pepper trickling down my legs and off my nose and hair and a splattered display across my dress. If I had planned it, I could not have created a bigger, stickier mess! And the worst part was that all of this came on the heels of one of the most disappointing days of my teaching career.

A student had been withdrawn from my class. It sounds simple, but it was so terrible to have him removed from my roll. He was a very bright boy, but we had butted heads several times over assignments and classroom rules. The final blow came when he walked between idling school buses instead of going around them on our return from the public library. In this case, his disregard of the rules was simply dangerous.

To make the situation even more heart-wrenching for me, he was the son of teacher-colleagues. I really wanted to make things right with him. To have him leave my classroom reflected failure in my teaching, even though his parents had told me, "It is for the best." This stubborn streak, an inability to admit defeat, is something that runs deep in me. Sticking to it (literally and figuratively) is how I operate, even though this attitude is not always for the best.

As my anguished tears began to tumble and mix with my view of the mess in the storage room, I reevaluated my position and wondered about any other possible job that would not break my heart. At that precise instant coworker Todd Holden waltzed into the messy pool with a booming "Howdy!" His warm smile disintegrated into dismay as he surveyed the catastrophe. "How can I help?" he kindly asked. Those words of support changed my day and reversed my attitude almost immediately.

Lessons Learned

Teaching does not always run perfectly, but with reflection and the support of friendly colleagues, it all can be made right. Every day is a day of learning for students and teachers alike. On that

day I learned to handle disappointments by facing them and then moving forward doing something I love—teaching. Realizing I could not please everyone all the time, I did know that I could make a difference for students who needed the knowledge and skills of reading, writing, and thinking I offered. That is what this profession is all about—teaching children, learning with them and from them, and accepting the responsibility of making a difference for their futures.

Planning for Excellence in Teaching

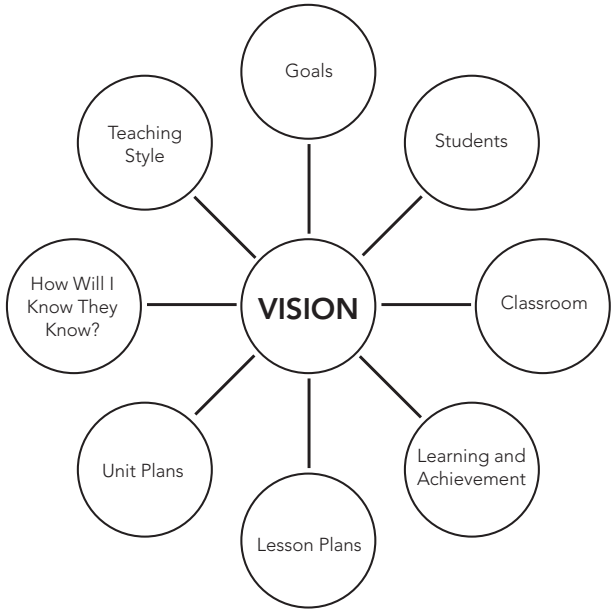
Being a teacher is far more than a job, a duty, or a paycheck. It is a calling. This calling provides the opportunity to work with learners as they advance through school. Teachers watch students grow and develop intellectually, guiding them as they tackle new concepts and ideas and leading them as they become self-sufficient and independent learners. The lessons that are taught, the methods that are incorporated, and the attitudes of teachers toward their students and toward learning have a lasting influence on life.

Teaching is definitely hard work. From preschoolers to seniors in high school, despite the difference in age, all students are just children full of potential and curiosity, waiting for their teacher to empower their learning and extend their knowledge. Good instruction from teachers who care promotes success in learning.

Vision for Teaching and Learning

Good teachers come to school and teach students who learn a little. Great teachers have clear goals and a big vision for students to learn and achieve at high levels. Creating a mind map of this vision of teaching provides a foundational guide for the year. Notes and descriptions can be added and adjustments made as needed. Figure 1.1 shows components essential for successful teaching. By studying and reflecting on each one, you will be better prepared for teaching. Knowing what you want students

Figure 1.1 **The Big Vision of Teaching**



to know and to be able to do, and how you plan to get it done, guides you in a direction to arrive at the final destination—successful student learning.

As you reflect on various components of the vision, consider questions such as these:

- Why is this important?
- How will I get this accomplished?
- What problems might I encounter and when?
- What indicators will tell me I have succeeded?

This vision acts as a reminder of the broad scope of responsibilities to be addressed during the school year.

Reflecting on the elements of the vision provides the self-knowledge necessary to fill in a sample chart, such as the one presented in Figure 1.2. In addition to your vision, use the basic grid to capture your beliefs, goals, and hoped-for achievements. Of course, experiences and unforeseen surprises will suggest

Figure 1.2	Sample Vision, Belief, Goals, and Achievement

Vision of Myself and My Teaching
- The classroom is organized.
- I understand the standards.
- I'm ready to teach.
- I have a sense of sanity because I have succeeded.
- I'm immensely smarter because of this experience.

Beliefs About Myself
- I can meet any challenge.
- I know and understand students, learning, and teaching.
- I know where to get help and when to ask for it.
- I will be a better person as a result of teaching students.

Goals for Myself
- Teach and reach all students.
- Grow and develop teaching skills every day.
- Feel successful in what I have taught.
- Learn every day—from students, peers, reading, research, writing.

How Will I Achieve It All?
- Have clear lesson and unit plans.
- Adjust lessons to meet the needs of my students.
- Assess during lessons so no student is lost.
- Learn everything I can about being a great teacher.

Vision of My Students as They Learn
- Students are eager, excited, exhilarated by learning.
- Learning goals are accomplished at all levels.
- Students are independent learners and willing to challenge themselves.

Beliefs About My Students and Learning
- All students are capable of learning.
- Students want to learn.
- All students want to succeed.
- Students need me.

Goals for My Students
- All students will grow as learners.
- Students will expand their love of learning.
- Students will expand their academic knowledge.
- Students will gain skills and understand concepts that will bring them lifelong success.

How Will I Help Every Student Achieve?
- Teach great lessons.
- Provide well-planned assessments.
- Constantly analyze lessons and learning.
- Carefully use the pacing calendar and curriculum so that learning goals can be met.

changes as your first year of teaching progresses. The first year (and every ensuing year) will be bursting with learning. A truly great teacher learns and grows every day.

Although the detailed responses of different individuals will vary, the ultimate goal is always the successful learning of students through excellent instructional strategies and guidance by the teacher. Planning as well as reflection on vision and goals add certainty to success.

"These darn kids. They just do not want to learn!"

"By golly, I taught it, and still 20 out of 23 failed the test!"

"I'm counting the days until spring break. This is the worst bunch of students I have ever had!"

If vacation is the only thing on a teacher's mind and the thought is not just the result of the exhaustive effort poured into every teaching moment, perhaps it is time to seek another job. If you hear negative words muttered by disgruntled colleagues, the best thing to do is to run! You must teach the students you have with the abilities and background that they possess when they arrive in your classroom. When you believe that every one wants to learn and succeed, you will find that students reflect your optimism.

Every day in teaching, whether it is the most glorious or the toughest, is critical to the success of students. When you expect the best behavior, intellectual output, and scholarly interaction, your goals are more likely to be achieved. Faith in students' capabilities and their desire to grow empowers students as it strengthens your talents and expertise.

Amber was a lovely little 1st grader, full of smiles but low in confidence. In kindergarten she had been labeled as a slow learner. Although the teacher had tried to disguise labeling, Amber sensed it, lived it, and suffered.

Amber's new teacher demanded excellence while designing avenues of individualized learning to help students succeed. Each day Amber gained more confidence. In mid-September, she pulled her teacher aside and whispered, "Mrs. Janhunen, when I got here I wasn't very smart. But you are making me smart. Thanks." Then Amber gently kissed her teacher's hand.

Responsibility and Teaching

As you think about the various factors that affect the elements in the grid in Figure 1.2, a critical question to ask yourself is this: Are you responsible enough to be a teacher who makes a difference in the lives and learning of children?

The goal is not to be an all-right teacher or a good teacher, but the absolute best. To determine this, take the following

true-or-false test. (Oh, yes. As a teacher you must love to take tests as well as give them!) The thinking behind each answer reveals much about you, your vision, and your beliefs about teaching.

Teachers are 100 percent responsible for

- Being organized and prepared for every lesson, every day.
- Preparing instruction that ensures learning for all.
- Designing lessons that educate students.
- Checking for understanding throughout the lesson.
- Finding and implementing a variety of activities, strategies, and teaching methods.
- Accepting that all students do not learn the same way or at the same rate.
- Reteaching as needed to help all students learn.
- Enriching each lesson to captivate and motivate learners.
- Caring deeply for every student.
- Realizing that some things just do not work, even with the best of planning.
- Picking up the pieces, loose ends, confusion, and misconceptions of learning and then uncovering ways to correct them.
- Starting each day fresh, excited, and dedicated to students.
- Ending each day by looking forward to tomorrow with enthusiasm and dedication.
- Knowing that what they say, do, teach, and model affects every student now and forever.
- Believing that *no other job* is as important as being a teacher.

Knowing that you have responded to each statement with a "true," I've saved the toughest question for last. True or false? Teachers are 100 percent responsible for

- Making all students learn.

Finally, a false! This one is impossible. No teacher can force students to do anything. However, students are relying on the expert knowledge and dedicated instruction of their teacher to

help them learn. No child wants to be a failure or to appear incapable. Your students depend on you.

I spent many years "forcing" students to learn. Even though in my heart I knew that they had to want to learn, to see the value of learning, I still pushed them hard—almost relentlessly. With experience I figured out that I needed to provide students with more ways to own their learning, through opportunities like self-selected reading and writing for reflection on learning. With prodding and encouragement, my students grew in independence and competence, knowing that I not only acted as a guide for learning but also honored and respected their insight and feedback. When you ask your students about what they know, you receive so much information in return.

Owning learning is evidenced when students are allowed to solve problems, explain events, and create products that demonstrate their understanding. Allowing students to own their learning means that you must be ready to accept multiple ways of discovering answers—answers that are not necessarily the same but that are plausible, or responses that with adjustments to correct misconceptions lead to learning that develops independence. In math class, owning learning might be demonstrated through multiple ways of solving a problem; in poetry it might be evident in different interpretations of the author's meaning; in woodshop it might be students constructing similar projects but selecting a variety of materials, designs, and finishing techniques. If you, the teacher, always provide one right answer, why would students ever need to really think?

Closing Advice

Teachers have the powerful responsibility of influencing student lives and learning. While this is ominous, to say the least, it is richly rewarding as you transport students to higher understanding and achievement. With a vision of excellence coupled with hard work, extreme effort, and the solid belief that all students are capable, you will discover many miracle-filled

moments generated by the excitement of your teaching and your students' desire to learn.

Each day you will also realize many things about yourself as you discover talents that perhaps even you did not know you have. As you challenge student minds to stretch and grow, you will find that you are exploding with new ideas to help students succeed. Though exhausting on the best of days, your teaching and caring about your students offer vitality and thrills that continuously replenish your energy.

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Where GREAT Teaching BEGINS

Planning for Student Thinking and Learning

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Introduction

Have you ever watched a child play school? Maybe you remember playing school yourself—lining up your younger siblings or teddy bears on the floor while you stood in front of them, taking charge. You, or the child you've watched, probably demonstrated most of the visible aspects of what teaching involves: directing, praising, reprimanding, asking questions, explaining things, and generally engaging in the routines of classroom life. Teaching is understood to be a performance with a script—a script that leaves some room for improvisation but repeatedly pulls the actors back to traditional routines. What is both fascinating and alarming about this script is that a teacher can perform it quite proficiently without generating much learning in students' minds.

In a wonderful essay reflecting on a long career spent investigating student learning, Graham Nuthall (2005) noted that, whatever the formal curriculum might be, students learn about classrooms and about what teachers do from their own experience of being students. Those students who grow up to become teachers themselves tend to put this learning into practice. Nuthall described "ritualized routines" (p. 895) of classroom teaching that

are carried on generation after generation and based primarily on principles of classroom management. Many of the teachers he observed had learned to be pleased with their lessons when they could see students demonstrating engagement and cooperating with the requirements of the assigned activities. Significantly, Nuthall noted that the primary focus for both students and teachers was task completion. Both groups measured the success of a lesson more by how well students had carried out classroom activities than by what students had learned from the activities.

In my own experience as a student, a teacher, and a teacher-educator, I have seen for myself exactly what Nuthall described. I grew up seeing teaching as a matter of keeping order, delivering information, assigning tasks and projects, and giving tests. Like so many of my peers, I internalized these behaviors—this performance—as being "What Teaching Is."

This ritualized-routine approach to teaching is no longer tenable in this age of instructional accountability, in which attention to individual students' learning has become a priority. We need to understand that for any given assignment, some of our students may be going through the motions—not engaging in the cognitive activity necessary to expand their knowledge base—while others may be reviewing information they already know. We need to confront the fact that too many students are thinking of their classwork not as a route to learning but as tasks to be gotten out of the way, and too many teachers are out of touch with the cognitive development that we hope and assume is occurring in our students' minds. If what we think of as good teaching, even teaching that embodies "best practices," does not necessarily result in our students learning, what are teachers and teacher-educators to do?

In his essay, Nuthall focused on the "cultural myths" that schoolchildren absorb and that teachers perpetuate about teaching practices, and perhaps it was because his attention was so focused on the events that could be observed and measured in classrooms that he did not directly address planning and designing instruction. Yet if we are to challenge these myths

and the practices that ensue from them, we must begin at the beginning of teaching, which is in the design of the whole instructional experience. And designing effective instruction requires educators to shift our attention from *teacher performance*—what the teacher does—to *student learning*—the intellectual work that students engage in and the outcome of that work.

In the more than 20 years I have been an educator, including the 12 that I have spent as an educator of teachers, I have seen that the most challenging feature of instructional design is creating objectives that focus on appropriate student learning instead of on classroom activities. I remember vividly how, as a beginner, I, too, lacked clarity about the purpose and practice of instructional design. My own early lesson planning efforts were superficial and tentative—not to mention of unpredictable effectiveness. I felt as though I were groping in a misty half-light, hoping that my next step would be the right one but not knowing how to tell whether it was or not. The only guidance available came from my students, who either learned what I intended for them to learn or did not—and, often, the nature and depth of their learning was only partly visible to me. Furthermore, I couldn't tell whether anything that I had done was responsible for my students' learning or if they had acquired skills and understanding from some other source.

Today, I see my own teacher-education students and many active teachers making those same uncertain gestures, guessing about the "right" way to frame objectives, assessments, and learning activities. Although education students take courses in instructional design and inservice teachers attend workshops and conferences that address selected details of instructional design, without a firm grasp of the purpose of instructional design, the details of how to plan lessons often presented in these classes, workshops, and conferences will simply be piled on top of a faulty conceptual foundation, and the desired outcomes of instruction will not be reliably achieved.

My own preservice education students have shown me, through their trials, mistakes, questions, and confusions, that they need to begin with the foundations of instructional design. So that is where this book begins.

I have also learned through experience that simply telling students things like "Objectives describe learning outcomes" or "Planning is necessary for coherent instruction" will produce nods of agreement but not necessarily the changes that will lead to more effective instructional design practices. Although my students' agreement may be real, basic shifts in perspective are difficult to bring about and require both time and practice. That is why the process of thinking about teaching and learning, for most people, must be taken in small steps, with many examples to illustrate the principles involved.

This book is not intended to provide an exhaustive account of everything that is important about designing instruction. Fortunately, many valuable sources of information are available about effective instructional and assessment methods to use in the classroom. The missing piece for today's teachers is a detailed account of how to establish the clear, effective learning objectives that will support subsequent sound decisions about instruction and assessment. For this reason, most of the emphasis in this book is on establishing objectives and all the thinking and conceptual understanding that underlies that work. Every teacher must know how to think about and carry out the detailed, step-by-step process of identifying outcomes for the whole teaching-and-learning enterprise.

Instructional design may seem deceptively easy to beginners. How hard can it be to figure out how to teach class tomorrow? Of course, once novice instructional designers grasp what the work really entails, the process can appear newly labyrinthine and mysterious—full of false starts and opportunities for error. It's natural to keep reverting to the teacher's classroom performance instead of attending to student learning outcomes because—and my students have made this clear over and over again—our experience has taught us what teachers do in a classroom, but it has given us very little information about what students should learn and how they should learn it. As students, we knew which of our peers answered questions correctly, but we did not otherwise pay much attention to what anyone was (or was

not) learning. As students, many of us did not even pay much attention to our own learning, because the routines of school encouraged us to focus on getting assignments done in a way that pleased the teacher. For that we were rewarded, whether we learned anything meaningful or not.

Beginning instructional designers legitimately do not know what their instructional objectives are, much less how to state them clearly and "correctly." When they are far enough along in the process of shifting their focus to student learning to grasp how much they really don't know, they are like youngsters learning to ride a bicycle. Wobbling across the empty parking lot with a death-grip on the handlebars, they are aware that however fiercely they hang on, the whole project could still crash. These fledging planners wonder how it's possible to do what their expert colleagues do—create lesson after lesson, day after day, knowing what to say and do so that students learn what they should learn. But once the skill of effective instructional design is developed and practiced sufficiently, once balance is attained and forward momentum is brought under control, the work begins to come naturally and seem essential. The question shifts from "How can I possibly do this well?" to "What was so hard about that?" The purpose of this book is to help every reader "hop aboard" the practice of effective instructional design and move forward with increasing confidence and success.

1

Instructional Design: Who and What Is It For?

Visualize a teacher at work. What do you see?

Most of us imagine a person standing in front of a group of students, talking to them, giving them information, demonstrating something, asking questions, or monitoring group work or seatwork. Those of us who are teachers might also picture ourselves at our desk or at our own kitchen table, grading a stack of papers.

It is natural to think about teaching in terms of performance in front of the class. As children, we absorbed an understanding of what teachers do from what we experienced as students in the classroom. We were aware of teachers' delivery of information, their interactions with us and our fellow students, and the activities or assignments they required us to do. We were certainly aware of teachers' role as evaluators. What we were generally not aware of, though, was the work our teachers did to plan *what we would learn* and *how we would learn it.*

Here's an alternative picture of a teacher at work: a woman is sitting at a table with a few colleagues, pen in hand, laptop open, surrounded by textbooks, journals, magazines, and three-ring binders filled with teaching

materials, including copies of state academic standards and the district's curriculum. This teacher and her colleagues are talking about a unit on the local community that they are in the process of planning. Together, they are exploring ways to bring social studies, English, science, math, and art into this unit—working to design instruction that will lead their 7th graders to achieve the grade-level curriculum learning goals. They are thinking less about their own performances than about what will be going on inside their students' minds. They are asking, "How can we translate the requirements of the state's academic standards into specific examples that will make sense to our students? What are the students ready to learn? What will engage them? What will they remember in the weeks, months, and years following this unit? How can we design this unit to be an effective, useful, and meaningful learning experience for them? How can we describe this plan in clear, precise, concise statements that will keep teachers and students on track throughout the unit?"

This is the "deep work" of teaching: designing instruction that takes teachers deep into content and deep into consideration of their students' learning. And although this example shows teachers planning collaboratively, it may be done just as effectively by individual teachers. What makes this approach to instructional design successful is that it goes far beyond selecting activities and writing tests; it extends past the teacher's performance to address the bedrock of the whole educational enterprise—demonstrated student learning.

The term "deep design" is intended to distinguish student- and learning-centered lesson planning from the classroom-centered, activity-oriented planning that is common among beginning teachers. Deep design work is not directly visible to students or to anyone else who is not part of it. Preservice and novice teachers may be only somewhat aware of its existence and its importance. It is based not on questions of "What will I do Monday morning?" or "What activity will my students enjoy?" but on questions of

what and how students will learn, and how teachers and other education stakeholders will know that students have learned.

Figure 1.1 contrasts the extremes of these two approaches to instructional design.

Figure 1.1 • Contrasting Views of Instructional Design

Teacher- and Classroom-Centered Instructional Design	Student- and Learning-Centered Instructional Design
Focus on activities	Focus on what kinds of thinking students do
Focus on teacher performance	Focus on intellectual skills students develop
Focus on classroom events and experiences	Focus on what students take away from the classroom events and experiences
Burning question: "What will we be doing today?"	Burning question: "What will students be learning today?"
Planning addresses only the teacher's time with students	Planning addresses long-term outcomes

The visible parts of a teacher's job—the instructing, assigning, organizing, and assessing—are not easy to do, but their functions and importance are obvious. But because the teacher's planning for every student's learning is not so visible, it's harder to explain who and what such planning is for. New teachers, or teachers who have not been trained to design instruction in the deepest sense, may reasonably assume that planning is for teachers; it tells the teacher what to do. Or they may see planning as something done for administrators, who want to ensure that every teacher has a plan in place to address state academic standards. The idea of planning being for students' benefit might be last on the list—or missing from it altogether.

This book provides a step-by-step look at the process of designing instruction that is centered on student learning. As we begin, let us consider some immediate questions you may have.

"Is Deep Design Really Necessary?"

A teacher whose official success is measured in terms of students' strong test scores and the satisfaction of students, parents, and administrators may feel that there is no need to engage in deep design if current planning practices get good results. It is true that results are the measure of success. However, at any time, individual students may experience difficulties that will require the teacher to focus more intently on their learning. Deep design will equip a teacher to tackle this challenge.

Even when all is going well, you can deepen your understanding of your own practice by asking questions like

- What assumptions about student learning underlie my choice of activities?
- Can I explain the learning goals I have for students?
- Do I explain to students the kinds of thinking and intellectual skills that my activities require?
- Am I confident that I am maximizing the development of long-term skills and knowledge in each and every student?

These questions direct attention to the true goals of education, which begin in the classroom but ultimately lie beyond it. The benefit of shifting the planning focus to deep design is that looking at the bigger picture of what you and your students are doing—and why you are doing it—prepares you to explain to students, colleagues, and other stakeholders how your instruction will lead to lasting student learning.

If you currently use an activity-centered planning approach and feel satisfied that it is working well for your students, you may find it interesting to apply the tests of good design described later in this book to your plans. It's

possible that student learning outcomes are driving your instruction after all. If so, it is likely that you are naturally aligning the elements of teaching—planning, instructing, and assessing—with state academic standards and your students' readiness to learn. Many good teachers operate effectively on their instincts and common sense. But the only way to get the most out of your instructional design is to examine it in detail. And you cannot share your good design practices with colleagues, parents, and students unless you have identified and articulated those practices.

There is one more thoroughly practical benefit of focusing on student learning rather than on activities: more effective time management. When an activity takes less time than anticipated, an activity-focused teacher must either search for ways to fill the remaining class period or give students free time. A learning-focused teacher will be glad to have a few extra minutes to develop students' knowledge further. That teacher might ask the students to explain what they have learned or to describe its connection to other topics in or aspects of the curriculum—and will almost always be rewarded with responses that show students to be up to the new challenges.

"Doesn't Deep Design Require More Work and Take More Time?"

Without question, deep design will be more work for teachers who are accustomed to begining and ending lesson planning by deciding what they and their students will do in class. But activity planning alone is superficial, unfinished planning. Determining what and how students will learn and how they will demonstrate their learning are not extra steps to be added but necessary steps that cannot be skipped.

The good news is that when your instructional design begins with a focus on students and then moves to classroom activities and your own performance, it does not need to take more time or effort. In fact, once you're sure of the desired learning outcomes, you'll often be able to map

out the route to achieving them through activities more quickly. In short, when you shift your thinking to student learning, you are engaging in *smarter* planning, not more difficult planning.

"Doesn't the Teacher's Focus Belong on What Happens in the Classroom?"

Since so much of a teacher's professional life "happens" in a classroom with students, it can be disconcerting to focus on aspects of the job that do not involve actual classroom activity. Of course you must put a great deal of attention and energy into what you do with your students, but this is not an either/or situation. Deep design does not remove classroom-activity planning from the design process; it simply shifts activity planning to a later point in the process.

A teacher may also resist the idea of planning with students' long-term knowledge in mind because the shift in focus it requires can feel overwhelming. Classroom events are more or less under the teacher's control, but the responsibility for student learning that endures beyond the classroom is a heavier load to bear. Nonetheless, preparing students for their futures should be at the heart of every teacher's classroom work. With the right approach, we can *all* do this—and do it well.

"But This Kind of Planning Does Not Describe What the Teacher Should *Do!*"

It's true that student-centered instructional design does not necessarily tell teachers everything they need to do in a class. However, focusing on the students, their intellectual work, and the desired end point of their learning will make it easier to see what *should* happen in class. Knowing where the instruction is headed in the long term is essential to understanding what to do in the short term.

Even more to the point, a lesson plan or unit plan is not a schedule of events or an agenda for a teacher to follow. Its purpose is not to document what must be done, minute by minute, class period by class period, but to document what students must achieve. In other words, the goal of effective instructional design is to record the designer's conceptual plan for student learning and, as such, it answers certain key questions:

- What will students learn?
- To what degree will they learn? To what depth and breadth?
- How will they acquire this learning?
- How will they demonstrate this learning?

This approach to instructional design does *not* necessarily answer the more specific kinds of questions properly addressed in teacher's schedule or agenda, such as

- When will I collect homework?
- How will I prepare students for tomorrow's assembly?
- What will I do about students who missed the last test?
- How will I form student groups for this lesson?

Such step-by-step instructions for what to do and when to do it must be prepared and maintained, but the schedule for these steps becomes clear only after the design for learning has been created.

"So Who Are Lesson Plans Really For?"

Lesson plans are for you, the teacher. They map out what learning activities you will conduct in the classroom, what materials you will need, and what assessments you will give. Lesson plans are also for your administrators. They inform administrators of how you will go about addressing academic standards and preparing students for standardized tests. Ultimately, though, lesson plans are for students. When well-designed, lesson plans tell teachers and administrators how to generate, support, and assess

students' learning. Any lesson plan that does not focus on student learning is incomplete.

In chapters to come, we will examine the elements of good design and work through the steps of creating effective, learning-focused instruction.

WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT

lesson planning?

If you're like most teachers, you focus on the material you need to present, what you will do and say, what you will ask students to do, and the assessments you will create and administer. And if you're like most teachers, you also know what it's like to be disappointed when this careful planning doesn't always lead to the deep understanding and mastery you'd intended.

> There's a better way to approach instructional design says author and teacher-educator Anne R. Reeves, and it's within every teacher's grasp. It begins with a simple mental shift from "planning for activities" to "planning for learning outcomes"—and a critical concentration on learning objectives.

Remarkable for its clarity and filled with vivid examples, *Where Great Teaching Begins* is a step-by-step walk through the crucial, behind-the-scenes intellectual work necessary to make instruction truly effective and help students learn deeply and meaningfully. Here, you'll discover how to

- Translate even the most inscrutable standards into strong, learning-focused objectives.
- Use effective objectives as the basis for excellent assessment.
- Craft engaging learning activities that incorporate both targeted content and necessary thinking skills.
- Pull objectives, assessments, and learning activities together into powerful plans for learning.

Whether you're a novice instructional designer or a veteran seeking a new, streamlined process, this book is a must-read take on how to plan and achieve the excellent learning all teachers aim for and all students deserve.