The First Days Are Critical

What you do on the first days of school will determine your success or failure for the rest of the school year. You will either win or lose your class on the first days of school.

The first days of school can make or break you. Based on what a teacher does or does not do, a teacher will either have or not have an effective classroom for the rest of the year. What happens on the first days of school will be an accurate indicator of your success for the rest of the school year.

Douglas Brooks, in his article “The First Day of School,”¹ discovered two things:

1. Very few teachers receive any instruction on what to do on the first day of school.

2. Very few teachers get any experience or training during student teaching on what to do on the first day of school.

The Purpose of School Is Learning

Douglas Brooks observed a group of teachers in his research. The ineffective teachers were those who began the first day of school with a fun activity and then spent the rest of the school year chasing after the students. Fun is fine in the classroom, but the fun is the result of accomplishment, not the purpose of learning. The effective teachers spent time organizing and structuring the classroom for student success.

The most important thing to establish the first week of school is CONSISTENCY. People do not want surprises or disorganization. Students want an environment that is safe, predictable, and nurturing. Effective teachers have classrooms that are caring, thought-provoking, challenging, and successful. They have this because they begin with classroom management procedures that create consistency.

Students like well-managed classes because no one yells at them and learning takes place. Effective teachers spend the first two weeks teaching students to be in control of their own learning. Unit C in this book may be the most important for you to read and implement as you start the first days of school.

Your First Day

Melissa Pantoja began the first day of her first year of teaching with a plan. She scripted her first day of school. She is like a coach who scripts the first 25 plays of a game. A teacher would not “wing it” in a classroom any more than a coach would wing it on a football field or a pilot would wing it on a flight from Austin to Memphis! The successful and effective teacher goes in with a plan and modifies that plan if conditions change.

Melissa’s script can be seen at www.teachers.net/gazette/JUN00/wong.html.

Nearly every teacher goes out to teach with no instruction or knowledge and no experience on what to do on the first day of school. Yet there is overwhelming evidence that the first two to three weeks of school are critical in determining how well students will achieve for the remainder of the year.

The first two or three weeks? How about the first two or three days? The first two or three minutes! The first two or three seconds!

Student achievement at the end of the year is directly related to the degree to which the teacher establishes good control of the classroom procedures in the very first week of the school year.

The effective teacher establishes good control of the class in the very first week of school. Control does not involve threats or intimidation. Control means that you know (1) what you are doing, (2) your classroom procedures, and (3) your professional responsibilities. It is urgent also that your students know that you know what you are doing.

You must have everything ready and under control when school begins. Your success during the school year will be determined by what you do on the first days of school.

This teacher is ready on the first day of school.
Effective People Know What They Are Doing

People who do things right are **EFFICIENT**. And people who do things right over and over again, consistently, are **EFFECTIVE**.

“My, he’s efficient!” This is what you say about someone who does things right. “She is very effective” is what you say about someone who does the right things or makes the right decisions so that the office is effectively run.

| Efficient: Doing Things Right |
| Effective: Doing the Right Thing |

The Effective teacher affects lives.

Effectiveness has to do with **DOING**. To be effective, you must be doing something, constantly working toward improved performance.

The Four Stages of Teaching

1. Fantasy
2. Survival
3. Mastery
4. Impact

There are four stages to teaching, yet many teachers never progress beyond the second one, survival. Which stage are you presently in? The purpose of *The First Days of School* is to get you to the third stage, mastery, so that you can make a difference in the lives of your students.

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School is a serious place.
People go to school to study, work, and produce—just like in an adult workplace. School is where people go to acquire knowledge, learn skills, and develop values that will make them productive citizens and help them grow to their fullest potential as human beings.

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Stage 1—Fantasy. A naive belief of neophyte teachers is that they are infallible. They believe that to be a successful teacher, all they need to do is relate and be a friend to their students. They also believe that teaching means doing activities, especially fun activities. They rarely talk about standards, accountability, or student performance.

Stage 2—Survival. Teachers are in survival when they rely on ineffective practices just to make it through the day. To them, teaching is a job, and they do it for the paycheck and vacation benefits. Teachers in survival spend much time whining about work conditions and making excuses. They find busywork for the students to do, copy notes from a chalkboard or transparency, show videos. They exhibit no accountability: “I teach the stuff; if they don’t want to learn it, it’s not my fault.” Or “I don’t see how this applies to me.” So they come each day to put in time and baby-sit.

Stage 3—Mastery. Teachers who know how to achieve student success employ effective practices. These teachers know how to manage their classroom, they teach for mastery, and they have high expectations for their students. Effective teachers strive for mastery by reading professionally and going to professional meetings. They teach to make a difference and exhibit accountability: “If the students are not learning, I need to find another way or discuss the problem with my peers to see if they have answers. I am responsible; I am a problem solver; I am a collegial member of a learning community.”

Stage 4—Impact. Effective teachers make a difference in the lives of their students. These are the teachers whom students come back years later to thank for affecting their lives. To make an impact on your students, you need to use effective teaching practices, which is the subject of this book. Students learn only when the teacher has an appreciable effect on a student’s life. When you reach this stage, you have gone beyond mastery. You have arrived as a teacher.

When you reach the impact stage, you will return to the fantasy stage—and fulfill your fantasy or dream of making a difference in the lives of your students. You’ll also become a teacher-leader and live a happier life with a sense of pride and accomplishment knowing that you are contributing to the profession.
Effective Teachers Affect Lives

Teachers who are efficient and effective are more capable of affecting the lives of students than teachers who are not efficient and effective. Perhaps you have heard the definition of education, as shown on the graphic to the right.

For instance, what is the difference between a student who is tardy and a student who is not tardy? Between one who turns in the homework and one who does not? Between one who studies for the test and one who does not?

It is not height, age, sex, race, religious affiliation, or socioeconomic background.

It is behavior or attitude. You change or affect the attitude of a student, and you suddenly have a student who is not tardy, participates in class, does the homework, and studies for the test.

You were hired to affect lives. You were hired not so much to teach third grade, history, or physical education as to influence lives. Touch the life of a student, and you will have a student who will learn history, physical education, even science and math, clean the erasers, staple all the papers, and turn cartwheels to please you.

The beginning of school is the most critical time of the school year. What you do in the first days of school to affect the lives of your students will determine your success during the rest of the year.
The Effective Teacher

1. Establishes good control the first week of school.
2. Does things right, consistently.
3. Affects and touches lives.
The Effective Teacher

The Three Characteristics of an Effective Teacher

1. Has positive expectations for student success.
2. Is an extremely good classroom manager.
3. Knows how to design lessons for student mastery.

There are three characteristics of an effective teacher, and they apply to all teachers.¹ Note that none of the characteristics have anything to do with grade level or subject taught. These characteristics are known, and you can easily learn how to be a very effective teacher.

You are probably eager to present your lessons, do your exciting activities, and share your wonderful knowledge. None of these will be successful until you become skilled in the characteristics of an effective teacher. Teaching is not covering chapters or doing activities. Teaching is a craft, a highly skilled craft that can be learned!

Every one of us is both a student and a teacher.

We are at our best when we each teach ourselves what we need to learn.

Positive Expectations

Positive expectations, sometimes called high expectations, should not be confused with high standards. Having positive expectations simply means that the teacher believes in the learner and that the learner can learn.

The belief in positive expectations is based on the research that whatever the teacher expects from the learner is what the learner will produce. If you believe that a student is a low-level, below-average, slow learner, the student will perform as such because these are the beliefs you transmit to the student. If you believe that a student is a high-ability, above-average, capable learner, the student will perform as such because these are the expectations you transmit to the student.

It is essential that the teacher exhibit positive expectations toward all students. That attitude benefits both the teacher and the student, as well as the overall classroom environment.

Classroom Management

Classroom management consists of practices and procedures that a teacher uses to maintain an environment in which instruction and learning can occur. For this to happen, the teacher must have a well-ordered environment.

Well-Ordered Environment + Positive Academic Expectations = Effective Classroom

Discipline has very little to do with classroom management. You don’t discipline a store; you manage it. The same is true of a classroom. Unit C explains how to manage a classroom, applying the principle that a well-ordered environment leads to an effective classroom. The teacher must establish a productive and cooperative working environment. The effectiveness of such an environment is the result of how well the teacher manages the classroom.
Lesson Mastery

Mastery is the student's demonstration that a concept has been comprehended or a skill can be performed at a level of proficiency determined by the teacher.

When a home is built, the contractor receives a set of blueprints from the architect. The blueprints specify the degree of competence that will be acceptable. The inspector who periodically checks on the construction always looks at the blueprint first and then checks the workmanship to see if the work has been performed to the degree of competence specified.

Teaching is no different. To teach for mastery, an effective teacher must do two things:

1. Know how to design lessons in which a student will learn a concept or a skill.

2. Know how to evaluate the learning to determine if the student has mastered the concept or the skill.

Student success in the subject matter of the class will be the result of how well the teacher designs lessons and checks for mastery.

The classroom of Sarah Jonath is structured for success.
The Effective Teacher

1. Exhibits positive expectations for all students.
2. Establishes good classroom management techniques.

Pam Ware of Gainesville, Georgia, is a drama teacher and winner of the national Milken Award. She produces and directs 13 shows each year—
with ease. Pam says, “I am a planner of the first order. I pride myself in management skills, setting the theater program and its value, explaining procedures, and presenting a calendar of time expectations and commitments from my students. I have very high expectations. Then I light a spark that will flame toward brilliant success.”
Yes, the Hardship Will End

The first day of school or a class—even the first few minutes—will make or break a teacher.

It is those first few minutes and first few days of school that are the subject of this book.

Clueless may be the best way to explain the plight of neophyte teachers. Their bag is brimming with a five- or six- or seven-step lesson plan, boxes of activities, the state performance appraisal instrument, five interpretations of educational foundations, nine theories of child development, and a collection of buzzwords. But they have no clue as to what to do in the first days and weeks of school.

Your first day of teaching will be an exciting anticipated event but very frightening at the same time. Yet you can succeed if you learn how to be effective on the first days of school.

Lagi Aukusitino and Richelle Dodeo, first-year teachers.

The First Year of Teaching Is the Most Crucial

New teachers feel

Isolated, Vulnerable, and
Deeply concerned with how
they will be perceived, yet
Afraid to ask for help.

They are hired,

Given a key,
Told which room is theirs, and
Given no support.

They are given the worst assignments.

They feel frightened.
They feel humiliated.
They are given no help.
They want someone to give them hope
to tell them when their hardship will end.
Selected Professional Educational Organizations

- American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance
- American Association of Physics Teachers
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
- American Library Association
- American School Counselor Association
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
- American Vocational Association
- Association for Childhood Education International
- Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities
- Association for Educational Communications and Technology
- Association for Gifted and Talented Students
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Comparative and International Education Society
- Council for Exceptional Children
- Council for Learning Disabilities
- Home Economics Association
- International Reading Association
- International Society for Technology in Education
- Kappa Delta Pi
- Lutheran Education Association
- National Alliance of Black School Educators
- National Art Education Association
- National Association for Bilingual Education
- National Association for Gifted Children
- National Association of Biology Teachers
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of School Nurses
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Business Education Association
- National Catholic Education Association
- National Council for the Social Studies
- National Council of Teachers of English
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- National Rural Education Association
- National Science Teachers Association
- Phi Delta Kappa
- Society for Music Teacher Education

Each of these organizations publishes a journal and holds meetings. Many have state and local branches. Consult with your mentor for addresses most can also be found on the Internet.

The First Year of Teaching Can Be Frightening

1. Teacher education will not have prepared you.
2. Student teaching will not have prepared you.
3. The district may not have prepared you.
4. Yet you will be expected to perform immediately.

Teacher Education Will Not Have Prepared You

Teacher education rarely prepares the student teacher for noninstructional tasks. You will have lots of ideas for instructional tasks: bulletin boards, activities, projects, art, books, and media.

But you probably will have received no training in such noninstructional activities as how to maintain discipline, conduct a parent conference, keep a grade book, act and dress for success, teach procedures and routines, or deal with negative, nonsupportive, and energy-draining students and colleagues.

The schools of education are not to be blamed. No one ever said that education ends with a college degree. The best teachers are also the best students. Good teachers are continually improving themselves by going back to college; joining professional organizations; attending conventions, conferences, and workshops; paying attention at in-service meetings; and working cooperatively with others on the staff in collegial support networks and learning communities to improve student achievement.
Student Teaching Will Not Have Prepared You

Student teaching rarely includes any training in what to do on the first day of school. First day? You probably did not receive any training for the first minutes of class when the students walk in and decide whether they are going to be with you or against you.

Your master teacher is not to be blamed. No one ever trained your master teacher in what to teach you. Few teachers took over a class on the first day of school when they were student teaching. Few student teachers enter teaching with any experience in what to do on the first day of school. Typically, the master teacher started the class and then turned the class over to the student teacher. Or the student teacher came to teach for a period of time during the school year.

Thus most student teachers enter the teaching profession with no training and no experience in what to do on the first day of school.

Induction Will Prepare You

What will really prepare you for teaching is if your district has an organized new teacher induction program. Induction is a structured two-year (or longer) program that will train and support you as you become an effective teacher. To learn more about induction, go to www.NewTeacher.com and read New Teacher Induction: How to Train, Support, and Retain New Teachers.¹

The new teacher induction program was my lifesaver! The techniques I learned in the new teacher induction program have proved to be vital to my students' success in the classroom and in the community. I have attended all three years of the induction program and have continued to improve because of it.

— Phyllis Prince, Special Education Teacher
West Thibodaux Junior High School, Louisiana

The District May Not Have Prepared You

In teaching, entry into the profession is sudden. Unlike the business world, where the newcomer goes through a training or apprenticeship period, gradually gaining knowledge, experience, and responsibility, this may not happen in the teaching profession. Newly hired teachers, not just neophyte teachers, are given a key to a room and told to go teach. What are you to do?

*Figure it out yourself.*
*Do it yourself.*
*Keep it to yourself.*

The beginning teacher is expected to assume the same tasks and responsibilities as the most seasoned teacher on the staff.

In the trades, plumbers and electricians go into an apprenticeship program, first working as an apprentice, then laboring as a journeyman, and finally qualifying as a licensed tradesman or craftsman. In sports, you begin as a rookie on the bench, slowly gathering knowledge and experience as you work toward a starting position and a higher league.

Have you ever wondered why your seemingly problem students do so well at a fast-food restaurant? Restaurants like McDonald's and Domino's Pizza have sophisticated training programs to prepare workers before they face the public. Go behind the scenes at one of these places, and you will see workers studying videos, learning and reviewing aspects of their jobs. **Effective districts and schools**, likewise, have an induction program for all newly hired teachers.
You Will Be Expected to Perform Immediately

Do not sign a contract until you ask a district if it has a new teacher induction program. Effective districts want to help their newly hired teachers succeed. They offer induction programs that begin before the first day of school and may extend for several years thereafter. Induction is more than orientation, mentoring, or evaluation (see pages v and xiv).

You will be expected to perform your full complement of duties immediately while learning them at the same time.

Yes, you will be expected to be perfect on the first day of school and then get better each year. You can do it, but you will be able to do it better if your district puts you through an induction program and then partners you with a mentor. Welcome to the teaching profession!

Our induction program helped me have a very successful first year. Thanks to my administrator, the staff developer, and the book The First Days of School, my days have been very exciting and worthwhile. I have continued to use the tools provided in the induction program and the book to help me achieve success with my students each new year.

Jaime Díaz
Tucson, Arizona

Some school districts have model classrooms that are prepared before the first day of school. Induction program teachers visit these classrooms to see how a classroom can be set up for the start of school.

Jaime Díaz is now working with fifth graders in his fourth year and is still very successful.
Your First Year of Teaching Can Be a Happy Experience

Here's the biggest secret to teaching success:
Beg, Borrow, and Steal!

It's really called research and learning. You walk into the classrooms of effective teachers, look around, and if you see something that you think might help you, say, "Gimme, gimme, gimme." There are many veteran teachers who will be happy to share with you and help you.

Your whole life is ahead of you, and it can be filled with happiness and success. If you want positive results from your life, you must keep certain responsibilities in focus:

- Work in a collegial manner with your colleagues.
- Associate with and learn from positive mentors.
- Join a professional organization.
- Continue to learn through classes, workshops, conferences, in-service meetings, books, journals, tapes, and advanced degrees.

Avoid teachers who constantly complain and make excuses. Do not allow people who cannot control their own behavior to be in control of your behavior. The only limitations are those you place on yourself and those you allow other people to place on you. You are the only person on the face of the earth who can use your abilities. It is an awesome responsibility.
The teacher in this classroom is a **professional**

with the required training, certification, and dedication necessary to provide a QUALITY EDUCATION to all students who enter.

**The Subject is Success!**
You Can Have Any Job in Education in Three to Five Years
with a Raise in Salary of 25 Percent or More

Your future in education can be very rewarding, but only the teachers who strive for success will be rewarded. It's no different with students. Only those who work hard and have the most positive attitudes get the best grades. Here are some reasons why the future looks good for you.

- By 2010, U. S. schools will need to hire more than 2 million teachers to replace those retiring from the current teaching force and to meet the needs of a growing population of students.

- All kinds of job opportunities will be available—and not just in the classroom. Many teachers will become administrators or college professors, hold jobs in educational organizations, write software, become consultants, run educational programs for private businesses, open child-care centers, and embark on many other educationally related endeavors.

- Business will get heavily involved because it must. And companies will reeducate workers who didn't learn in the classroom. Private industry will be spending more money on education than public education.

- Although teachers are in the learning profession, they are among the worst when it comes to wanting to learn how to improve their own competencies. Most teachers do not go to conferences and deride in-service meetings.

- Because many teachers do not want to grow, those who do can have almost any position in education in three to five years at a salary 25 percent more than what they are making right now.

There is a new sense of urgency about our schools, a hopeful sign. You can play an active role during this time of urgency—and be rewarded for your contribution.
The Effective Teacher

1. Works cooperatively and learns from colleagues.
2. Seeks out a mentor who serves as a role model.
3. Goes to professional meetings to learn.
4. Has a goal of striving for excellence.
You Are in a Helping Profession

Teachers are not in private practice.
We are in the helping and caring profession,
a service profession to help people
enhance the quality of their lives.

Anger, grief, and revenge are tiring. Instead, for happiness, sanity,
and a positive outlook, it is essential that you understand your
role in the teaching profession. This applies to all teachers,
experienced as well as entry-level,
first-year teachers.

Teaching is a craft. It is a service
profession. If you want to choose
your own hours, shudder yourself
behind closed doors, decide when
and what you want to do, treat
people as you please, be a brain
surgeon, a self-employed
 cabinetmaker, or a real estate
broker. Open a pizza restaurant,
design and market computer
software, or deal in stocks,
bonds, futures, and commodities.
You Are Employed by a School District

If you choose to be a teacher, know that you will be an employee of a district or a board of education. When you sign a contract, you are agreeing to teach the district’s curriculum as well as to abide by and carry out the district’s policies, rules, and regulations. As a district employee, you are not allowed to teach only what you want or to do as you please.

- **The district is owned by the local citizens.** It has a set of policies and regulations governing the behavior of all employees and students to protect this ownership.

- **The district has a curriculum.** The district’s curriculum has been and will be an evolving product, formulated by a district committee made up of many of your colleagues.

- **The district has employees, like you.** Your colleagues brought years of experience and expertise with them to formulate the district’s mission, philosophy, and curriculum. The board approved their work, and it is the curriculum for the district, of which you are an employee.

For your happiness and effectiveness, accept in your own mind and heart that you can live and perform comfortably with the district’s role for you. If you can’t live with the district’s expectations for you, perhaps you should go into private practice.

You Will Not Be in One Room Forever

Understand that your first assignment will not be your last assignment. For your sanity, accept that in a world changing at breakneck speed, you will not be allowed to stagnate in the same room teaching out of the same book forever.
Furthermore, you will be expected to do your job with the same enthusiasm that you expect from your own students. You will be expected, on your own initiative, to serve on committees, confer with parents, and attend meetings, in-service programs, conferences, college classes, and workshops to further yourself and the district’s goals.

As an employee of the district, you should expect to be reassigned from time to time. Be a model of adaptability. Just as you expect your students to go into a changing world and adapt, show that you can adapt and excel in a changing world. Finally, understand that you have a role as part of a larger community and society.

Understand Your Role

1. The schools are owned and operated by the citizens of your local community.

2. Schools are the foundation for transmitting the values and traditions that ensure our life in a free society.

3. The schools are built for the STUDENTS.

Take Responsibility for Yourself

To be an effective teacher, you need to move on to the third stage of teaching: Mastery—the subject of this book. Survival, the second stage (Chapter 1), is a normal stop on your journey as a teacher, but the ideal is to get beyond it quickly. Yet on every teaching staff from kindergarten through graduate school, there are instructors who have been teaching for decades and are still at survival. Why does this happen to some teachers? They acquire ineffective teaching attitudes and techniques early on, and these become crystallized into their permanent teaching repertoire.

Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not.
—Thomas Huxley
What’s the Difference Between an Effective Teacher and an Ineffective Teacher?

There’s only one difference: The ineffective teacher is simply not doing what the effective teacher is doing. Do what the effective teacher is doing, and you will be effective—instantly.

Successful people MAKE themselves do the things that unsuccessful people will not do.

The effective teacher is a creative teacher, one who can think, reflect, and implement. Effective teachers steal from the best and learn from the rest. They look at the resources available to them and reorganize those resources to work toward a goal.

Ineffective teachers look at the resources available to them, move them aside, and rely on busywork as an excuse for learning. They whine that nothing applies to them, fully expecting others to tell them what to do.

Effective teachers are problem solvers. “I teach myself how to think,” they tell themselves. “I analyze, synthesize, and create materials to help students learn.”

A true professional and effective teacher is a learner who learns along with the students.

—“The Effective Teacher Thinks,” www.teachers.net/gazette/NOV01/wong.html

Isolation

is unique to the teaching profession and, by implication, to the whole educational system.¹

Teacher isolation is a reality. It is unfortunate that many schools do not develop a culture where colleagues learn from and respect each other’s contributions. Many teachers become comfortable in their isolation. Teachers who work in isolation cut themselves off from sources of useful information, both colleagues and professional resources. Survival mode results when teachers stay within the limitations of what they know or do not know, and the latter is always much greater.

Ineffectiveness is tiring. Working with limited information, teachers mimic one another. They develop bad habits. They resort to busywork to keep students quiet. They develop cynical attitudes toward conferences and in-service meetings, stunting their own growth. They adopt the classic stance of survival and find their life very tiring.

Good habits are easy to develop. Bad habits are difficult to break. If you are a new teacher, develop good teaching attitudes and techniques and you will be happy. If you are a veteran teacher, you can be happy and effective tomorrow. Please do the following:

✓ Turn to Unit E and read Chapters 25 and 26 and the Epilogue.
✓ Read Chapter 5 to find out how research can help you.

Then get ready for three exciting units—on positive expectations, classroom management, and lesson mastery.

If you want to become a professional educator, have a career with a future, be happy, and be recognized as a person who makes a difference in the lives of others, begin by making an impact on your own life. **A teacher cannot give what he or she is not.**

Some people can give thousands of reasons why they CANNOT succeed at something when all they need is one reason why they CAN succeed.

If you do not take responsibility for yourself, no one else will. **It's that simple.** You make a statement of dignity to yourself and the teaching profession when you acknowledge and accept that you make a difference.

**Get to Know All Your Colleagues**

Get to know all your colleagues. And listen to them. You will see many who are there to help enhance the lives of the students. Many know what they are doing and are happy to share with you. Learn from them. The happiest and most successful teachers, administrators, parents, and school board members are there to work WITH you to help you become an effective teacher so that you, in turn, can help and affect students.
It is said that the three most important words in real estate are location, location, location. The three most important words for a teacher are listen, listen, listen.

If you are a beginning teacher, listen, listen, listen. If you are an experienced teacher, listen, listen, listen.

**WELCOME (back) to the helping and teaching profession.**

---

**The Effective Teacher**

1. Can explain the district's, school's, and department or grade level's curriculum.
2. Realizes that teaching is not a private practice.
3. Is flexible and adaptable.
4. Listens, listens, listens.
Research is the process of critical thinking and problem solving. It is this ability that sets humans apart from all other living things. Research is simply the use of the human mind to search for and seek answers or, as some would say, to search for the “truth.”

Research is what a person does to find answers. Research is not something only scientists do. Businesspeople do research; so do baseball players, knitters, plumbers, lawyers, dentists, artists, and homemakers. Students, when they do term papers, do research.

Humans have always been seeking and searching. And that is what research is all about, searching. To search and search and search, over and over again. That is why it is called re-search.

### The Research Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem:</th>
<th>What do I want to know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prediction:</td>
<td>What do I think is the right answer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure:</td>
<td>How will I solve the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data:</td>
<td>What will I look for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion:</td>
<td>What do the results tell me?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you change a recipe, you are doing research.
It May Be Dangerous to Teach as You Were Taught

Since the 1960s, much research has been done on education. Before that time, much about teaching, as well as much about running a school, was based on myths, hearsay, and traditions handed down from teacher to teacher or on teachers' recollections of how they were taught when they went to school.

No education professor, administrator, in-service speaker, or teacher at a workshop has ever said that the model of teaching presented in the graphic at the left is the way to teach.

Unfortunately and erroneously, many teachers teach as they were taught. Most teachers teach as their academic college professors taught them simply because that was their last and most remembered educational experience. They have lost sight of two important facts:

- Academic professors are not teachers. They are researchers who are creating, seeking, and gathering new knowledge.
- Most academic professors do not have teaching credentials. They are not certified to teach.

Yet many teachers teach as their college professors taught and think that this is teaching.

Regrettably, many teachers succumb to teaching according to the latest fad, philosophy, or political agenda. They jump from one program or fad to another, never asking for the research evidence of its success. This is why Richard Elmore, at Harvard University, says,“Most decisions made in education, especially in urban schools, are made for the benefit of the adults—not the children.”

Ineffective teachers talk more about the programs or fads they are using, whereas effective teachers talk more about the achievement of their students. Always remember, student achievement and success are why teachers teach.
When Should You Ask Questions During a Video?

Educational research tells you.

Bob Wallace, a middle school teacher in Ventnor, New Jersey, reported the following as a result of his research with his students.

He divided his students into three groups and did the following:

**Group 1:** He showed the students a video and gave them a test.

**Group 2:** He briefed the group on the video to be shown and then showed the same video as shown to Group 1 and gave the same test.

**Group 3:** He briefed the group exactly as he had Group 2 and then showed the same video. However, during the video, he stopped the tape frequently. During each stop, he asked questions and held class discussion. He then gave the same test as he had given to Groups 1 and 2.

Guess which of the three groups scored the highest on the test. Group 3, of course.

This confirms what research has found to be an effective way to ask questions in the classroom.

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Educational Research That Applies to Every Teacher

John P. Rickards discovered two things:

1. The most ineffective place to print questions is at the end of a textbook chapter.

2. It is an ineffective method to give a student all the questions for an assignment at one time and then ask the student to answer all the questions and to turn them in all at one time.

Rickards found that if you want a student to achieve high-level comprehension, you should intersperse the questions throughout the text.

You know that this is true from having taken reading comprehension tests. Reading comprehension tests are not written with pages of text followed by a long list of questions. They constantly go back and forth, a paragraph or two of text followed by a few questions.

To put it another way, no doctor asks questions when the patient is dead. A doctor intersperses questions during the treatment of a patient.

Likewise, the effective teacher does not ask all the questions at the end of the discussion, class period, video, chapter, lecture, or meeting. The effective teacher who wants high-level comprehension intersperses questions throughout all class activities. This is what the research tells us.

Effective teachers do what the research tells us is most effective. Effective teachers use proven research-based practices. Why would you do otherwise?

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Effective Teachers Use Research-Based Practices

People who know what to do and people who know how to do it will always be working for those who know why it is being done.

Educational research is not all theoretical, conducted in an ivory tower. Nearly all educational research quoted in this book was performed by researchers looking at teachers and students in functioning schools and reporting on effective and ineffective practices. The effective teacher does three things:

1. Understands how research is done

2. Uses proven research-based practices

3. Understands that these practices are used by thousands of other teachers and are tried-and-true methods that work

It is one thing to know what you are doing. It is another to know how to do it. Most important, you need to know why you are doing what you are doing.

There is an extensive body of knowledge about teaching, and the effective teacher understands and uses this knowledge. Do not teach from hearsay, myths, or prevailing practices. To be an effective teacher, understand that effective school research is based on the reporting of what effective teachers do. These methods are used by hundreds of thousands of effective teachers. You can be one also.

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Research cannot and does not identify the right way to teach, nor does it suggest that certain instructional practices should always or never be used. But research can illuminate which instructional practices are most likely to achieve desired results, with which kinds of learners, and under what conditions.  

— Myriam Met

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Research on Improving Student Achievement

Aligned Time on Task: Students who are actively focused on educational goals do best in mastering the subject matter.

Research findings: More than 130 studies support the obvious: The more students study, the more they learn! Time alone, however, does not suffice. The lesson criteria, learning activities, and tests must be matched and emphasized. (To see how this is implemented, refer to Chapters 22 and 23.)

Cooperative Learning: Students in small, self-instructing groups can support and increase one another’s learning.

Research findings: More than 50 studies state that increased academic achievement is greater when there is frequent exchange among teachers and students. In addition, students learn teamwork skills that are essential in the workplace. Cooperative learning, however, should be only one of many different practices used by a teacher. (To see how cooperative learning is implemented, consult Chapter 24.)

Extensive Reading: Extensive reading of material of many kinds, both in school and outside, results in substantial growth in the vocabulary, comprehension abilities, and information base of students.

Research findings: Cognitive abilities, such as comprehension and vocabulary, are enhanced with an increase in time spent reading, inside and outside of school. Studies show, however, that children spend no more than a few minutes a day reading on either assigned or independent reading. School resources need to be provided for materials and large blocks of time for students to read.

Wait Time: Pausing after asking a question in the classroom results in an increase in achievement.

Research findings: Students are given less than one second to respond to a question. Increasing wait time from three to seven seconds, accompanied by a high-order question, results in students responding with more thoughtful answers and an increase in science achievement.