Becoming an Effective Teacher in America

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Reflections on Teaching and Learning

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Those who embark upon careers as educators in America (or anywhere else), can easily be overwhelmed by a vast number of suggestions as to how to become effective teachers. They can thus get the feeling of being mosquitoes in a nudist colony . . . They can develop a sense of what must be done, but they just do not know where to begin. This volume was designed to help professional educators learn where to begin in order to become effective over the course of their careers. It is dedicated to the many learners whose learning was facilitated by the author and who helped the author continually strive to become effective as teacher.

And, of course, it is also dedicated to my wife, who allowed me to hide in the basement for the many hours it took me to write this book.

INTRODUCTION

Baseball great Hank Aaron once said, “In order for people to listen to you, you have to have done something.” It was only after he amassed his amazing total of 755 home runs and was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame that he became vocal about a variety of social topics, including the racial injustice in baseball when he first got to the major leagues. I have only hit two home runs in all my years of playing organized baseball and have not been elected to a hall of fame of any kind, but I feel I have “done something” during my 45 years as a professional educator.

Upon graduation from high school, it seemed to me that everyone’s favorite question was, “And what are you going to be?” The only answer I was able to give at the time was, “I am not going to be a teacher!” I had come from a family of teachers. My father was a teacher; my brother had become a teacher; my mother trained as a teacher before entering the field of retail sales; my aunt had started out as a teacher before transitioning to the healthcare profession. I had come from a family of public school teachers, and I did not want to follow the tradition. I considered myself to be at the time a professional rebel!

But after four years of undergraduate education, extensive reflection, and interaction with some excellent teachers, the same question again became quite common, and this time I could hardly wait to start teaching! My goal had become to make some small part of the world a little better for my having been alive. I reached the conclusion that my contribution could best be made by becoming a teacher in order to help some students learn to THINK.

The biggest fault of many teachers is they are usually trying to “teach”. My philosophy of education had developed around the concept of allowing learners to learn and to discover – not by preaching and lecturing but rather by establishing teachers as Master Planners and Organizers of

Learning Activities (for if students do not want to learn, no amount of "teaching" will ever make them learn!).

In many of the classrooms I had been a part of, too much emphasis was placed on memorization of factual data and not enough on the values and ethics of individuals. Helping individual students develop their very own sets of values should be, I believed, one of the primary tasks of an effective educator. In other words, a "good teacher" should be concerned with helping students learn how to THINK – about themselves, about their families, about their entire environment. For I had discovered all of the factual data in the world would be of no use to anyone unless it could be applied to the surrounding world.

In high school I was virtually a "straight A student", but I never learned to think. I memorized dates, figures, and rules, and did quite well on tests, but never learned how to use anything I had "learned". My goal in education therefore became to help students acquire a skill I never acquired in my school days – the ability to THINK.

This goal was intensified during a summer camping trip taken to Eastern Europe and the former U.S.S.R. Although reading but a single book, I "learned" more in ten weeks than I had in three full years of college undergraduate experience. Given the opportunity to explore life as it is outside of the classroom, I was amazed at how much could be discovered about myself and my relationships with other people.

In my first job (as a college admissions recruiter) upon graduation, I was able to visit secondary schools across the country and to talk with students in these schools about their current and future educational plans. These experiences gave me varied insights into the field of education in America and into the thought processes of the American teenager. I became even more fascinated by the achievements and problems of American school systems.

I have spent well over 40 years as a teacher (elementary, secondary, undergraduate, graduate) and administrator. At many points in my career, I considered leaving my chosen path as an educator, but whenever I came to such a fork in the road, my reflections guided me back to the realization

that the decision made to become an educator was the best one for me, given my interests, abilities, and skills. I could never find another professional direction more appropriate for me to take. Not all days were good ones, but most were fulfilling in some way, and I usually determined that I was making a positive difference in the lives of others.

The world has, indeed, changed since my early years as an eager, young, fledgling educator, and schools have changed in reaction to the changes in the world served by these schools. Hopefully, I was also changing in reaction to my life experiences, but I could always see good schools around me, and I could always see good teaching taking place in these schools. Yes, good schools have always been good schools, and good teaching has always been good teaching.

The writing of this book was undertaken to assist potential teachers in making the reflections necessary to decide if they should truly consider becoming teachers in America and, if so, how they can become the best possible resources for their future students. In other words, the goal of the book is to help potential educators learn how to become EFFECTIVE TEACHERS, and how to build the philosophy necessary to remain consistently effective. Teaching is a noble profession, but it is not right for everyone, and it is definitely hard work to teach others at any level. By reading the book, by discussing its concepts with others, and by reflecting upon the topics addressed, it is hoped you can decide if teaching is the right choice for you!

Why did I become a teacher, and why did I continue to be a teacher? I chose to teach because I considered it my responsibility to make the world a better place by sharing my experiences with the next generation, helping others learn to think at a level I never learned until I had completed my formal “education”. Guiding learners along an educational journey, using the teachable moments discovered together, can be a rewarding, satisfying way to spend one’s professional time. The educational journey of each student is unique, which adds to the challenges of an effective teacher.

I wish you well as you consider the benefits of leading learners along their individual educational journeys . . .

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS A SCHOOL?

"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized."
—Haim Ginott

A school can be any place where teaching meets learning. It can be a one-room country schoolhouse, a small brick-faced building, a huge, multi-leveled complex, a quiet, shady place under a tree in a forest, or a seat in front of a computer screen. It matters not as long as a means is provided for teaching to effectively meet learning.

What is *learning*? Many definitions have been advanced for learning within the literature and within the practice of education. Learning has been defined as processing information to gain meaning, gathering meaningful knowledge and purposefully using it over a lifetime, or anything that results in a change of behavior. The author prefers, however, to define learning as simply connecting new information with prior knowledge to create new knowledge. Learning involves mastering concepts rather than simply being exposed to concepts. Most students at any level will not know how to learn at that level, so they must first learn how to learn at their own developmental level before they can benefit from new facts and/or concepts. Thus, the first thing teachers must teach their students is how to learn at a given developmental level. In other words, teachers must teach their students how to connect new information with prior knowledge to create new knowledge.

What is *teaching*? I have often heard it defined by educational theorists as being the Guide on the Side rather than the Sage on the Stage. Throughout my practice as an educator, though, I have come to define teaching as doing *anything* necessary to facilitate learning. Teaching is not always efficient and is not always easy. Teaching takes both time and commitment. It is not necessarily standing in front of people and talking or showing a PowerPoint presentation, although doing so can be considered to be part of teaching if it results in learning.

Some call teaching an art and some call teaching a science. This author considers it to be both an art and a science. It is an art because teachers must find some elements of effective teaching within themselves; it is a science because teachers can be taught some things to help themselves become better educators. Practice under the guidance of committed mentors can lead to improvement both in the science of teaching and in the art of teaching.

Becoming an effective teacher is definitely difficult! Perhaps James H. Stronge said it best:

> "Recognizing and understanding for a teacher is like getting into the driver's seat of a 5-speed, stick-shift automobile. The ineffective teacher manages to get the car in gear, but cuts the engine off at every stop sign. The effective driver, like the effective teacher, abruptly and simultaneously handles multiple tasks and multiple meanings without losing sight of the goal of moving toward a specific destination." [1]

An ideal school (if there really is any such thing) must somehow bring effective learning and effective teaching together. Students who have learned how to learn must interface with effective educators, that is people who can be philosophically diverse but who like to be with students and who are willing to do whatever is necessary to facilitate the learning of those wanting to learn. This group of people (a faculty) should be creative, flexible, intelligent, and instructionally innovative.

Working as a team, such a faculty must determine what and how to teach and how individual faculty members can rely upon one another to make the most of their individual strengths. A solid curriculum is necessary to

serve as a "road map" for the educational journeys of the students, but license should be given to take side trips as students are guided toward the established curricular destinations.

Exactly what the instructional plan looks like is not critical, but it should draw heavily upon at least some of the following: **Math** should be taught conceptually, emphasizing the use of manipulatives and problem-solving techniques. **Science** should be built around extensive experimentation and the use of hands-on strategies. **Language Arts** should involve the integration of **Reading**, **Spelling**, and **Writing**, emphasizing both communication and comprehension. **Social Studies** should be integrated within the contents of other subject areas. **Physical Education**, **Art**, and **Music** should stress development of concepts that can be appreciated and utilized throughout the future lives of the students. **Special Education** should be based on a model of inclusion to the greatest extent possible. At all times there should be lots of active learning, coordinated by sincere, caring, committed educators, not just at the elementary level but at all levels of education.

An ideal school should be a place where expectations for students and teachers are high, but also where learning is fun and exciting. It should be a place where the needs of each individual student are carefully assessed and monitored, allowing for instruction to be adjusted in order to meet those needs. Ideally, the strengths of each teacher should be called upon to help meet these individual student needs. The prevailing atmosphere in an ideal school should be that the people therein feel free to take risks, to make mistakes, and to learn from their mistakes . . . coming together as a community with the common goal of making the most of everyone's unique abilities. Materials and strategies should constantly be tailored to fit the students instead of tailoring the students to fit the materials and strategies.

Creating a positive classroom climate should always come before addressing the academic content to be addressed. The overall environment must be conducive to learning at all times.[2] It is vital to establish the elements of clear communication and a positive culture for learning for every learning situation before the school can be considered ideal.

Although many theorists and practitioners have attempted to advance recipes for a physical background that might help a teacher facilitate the development of such a desired culture, few have come up with recipes that will work in all cases. Perhaps Alfie Kohn[3] has spoken most effectively about a useful formula for teachers to use in building a climate to support learners' desires to find out about things by transforming "doing to" classrooms into "working with" classrooms. Kohn encouraged educators to walk into classrooms and look for certain signs of the potential for learner-centered learning. Chairs should be around tables with comfortable areas for working. Walls should be covered with student work and signs should be created by students instead of by the teacher. Teachers should sometimes be hard to find because they are working from in the midst of students, speaking with warm and respectful voices, rather than standing in the "front" of the room and speaking with the loudest voices in the room. Students should be welcoming and eager to demonstrate what they are doing. Instead of students all doing the same thing, a variety of activities should be taking place at the same time. Outside of classrooms, the overall atmosphere should be inviting with student work on display in the hallways in an effort to emphasize something called community. The staff (including office and custodial staff) should be welcoming toward each other, toward students, and toward visitors.

In designing the layout for their own classrooms, teachers should begin by reflecting upon the answers to a series of questions:

- What do you want your classroom to physically look like?
- What will you need in your classroom to teach in the way you want to teach?
- How will the seating arrangement help facilitate the type of the learning environment you want to develop?
- Will the physical arrangement enable you to maintain your proximity to and visibility of all students at all times?
- Will you have a clear view of all instructional areas?
- Will all students have a clear view of the teacher from all parts of the room?

- Are potentially noisy areas separated from areas that may need a quieter atmosphere?

Only when these questions have been satisfactorily answered can the teacher seek to develop the productive learning environment necessary to support a positive culture for effective learning.

Building Community

One of the most important things an educator can do in order to become an effective educator is to facilitate the development of a supportive community of learners. Hillary Rodham Clinton[4] wrote a simple book to help teachers (and parents) see what is necessary to establish such a community. Based on the African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child", the author (together with illustrator Marla Frazee) clearly showed what is necessary to establish the culture needed for an ideal school.

The input of everyone is needed to make a productive village, beginning with that of the children. Everyone has a job to do in the village, but neither students nor their teachers have precise instructions to begin construction of the village. In the village (i.e. the school) all children (i.e. the students) must have the support of a "champion" to guide them along their educational journey and the right tools to get the job done. Caring and kindness are important for students to see they have the support of their champions. In a village (and in a school) everyone must believe in each other and support each other. So in order to build the ideal school, all members of the school staff must work together with students (and their families) to construct the community necessary to facilitate the progress of all learners. No single teacher can do it alone, but each teacher can seek to become that champion needed by the learners and the catalyst required to facilitate the development of the positive community vital to the framework of the individual classroom and of the entire school.

FOCUSSING QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

What steps would **you** first take in order to establish a positive climate and a productive learning community in **your** classroom?

How would **you** go about attempting to develop an ideal classroom within an ideal school?

CHAPTER TWO

THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance you must keep moving."
—Albert Einstein

Well before America's public schools were envisioned, written language was developed in 4000 B.C. It took another 2000 years before the first real schools appeared (in Egypt for nobility and scribes). By 1000 B.C. China had developed an educational system for the elite, and by 500 B.C. the Greeks had constructed what can be considered the foundations of western education. Afterward, such pioneer educators as Socrates (before he drank hemlock in 347 B.C.), Plato, and Aristotle laid the groundwork for deliberate approaches to teaching that were followed by others, and libraries were established in Egypt as centers of learning. Some years later, universities were established in Paris, Bologna, and Cambridge. About 100 years before Latin grammar schools had gained a foothold in England early in the 1500s, 38 universities were successfully functioning in the surrounding areas. The first classical secondary school opened in Germany in 1536, and an Indian school was established in Cuba in 1568. The principle of tax-supported schools was established by the English Poor Law in 1601, and compulsory schools were established in Holland by 1618. All of this took place before Plymouth Colony was settled in 1620 and the Boston Latin Grammar School was founded in 1635. These early movements, however, were almost exclusively for boys.

The evolution of America's public schools did not take off until 1647[5], when the Massachusetts Puritans first compelled the creation of schools to teach basic reading, writing, arithmetic, and history (the latter subject addressed primarily to help cultivate values that served a democratic society). The Puritans made the assumption that churches and families

were responsible for raising children, and for over 200 years, America's schools continued to focus on reading, writing, arithmetic and history. In 1821 the first American high school was created, but the first American kindergarten did not appear until 1855. America's schools began with the education of older students and worked backward (or was it really forward?) to meeting the needs of its younger students. The National Education Association was formed in 1870, helping to professionalize the profession of teaching.

After 1900, three topics were added to the list of schools' responsibilities, all of them appropriately addressed by elementary teachers: immunization, nutrition, and overall health. At the same time, the first junior high schools were established (in California and Ohio) in 1909 and 1910. During the period from 1920 to 1940, schools added the practical arts (cooking and sewing), vocational education, and physical education; also incorporated during these two decades were school lunch programs. Although we take feeding children at schools for granted now, it was significant to give schools the task of feeding America's children one-third of their daily meals.

Sex education, driver education, safety education, and additional foreign language instruction were all given over to the schools in the 1950s. The 1960s saw the addition of career education (rather than just vocational education), consumer education, peace education (after surviving World War I, World War II, and the Korean Conflict), leisure education, and recreational education. In the 1970s, schools added drug and alcohol abuse education, parent education, character education, values clarification, and special education . . . the latter being mandated by the federal government. This decade also saw the development of school breakfast programs, so that some schools began to feed many children two-thirds of their meals.

The 1980s saw an even greater rush of additional topics being addressed. Keyboarding, computer education, global education, ethnic education, multicultural education, nonsexist education, bilingual education, English as a second language, early childhood education, stranger/danger education, and sexual abuse prevention education all found their way into schools, along with the early exploration of full-day kindergarten. In

addition, this time period saw schools being charged with providing preschool programs for children at risk, after-school programs for children of working parents, and child abuse monitoring as a legal requirement.

Even as HIV/AIDS education, death education, and gang education were added in the 1990s, all highly valued by many Americans, few of the existing school functions were removed, and little (if any) time was added to the school day or school year. Thus, the schedules of schools rapidly became overburdened with less and less time available to meet the needs of the students.

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, and the U.S. involvement in World War II, Congress provided a huge influx of funds to address the educational needs of veterans returning home, known as the GI Bill, an act of Congress which broke open the doors of higher education in the United States. This was followed shortly by the U.S. "baby boom", causing a rapid increase in school enrollments, and the extension of the GI Bill's educational benefits to Korean War veterans. Schools continued to expand in many directions during the next decades, spurred in part by the birth of the National Science Foundation in 1950, the Soviet Union's launch of *Sputnik* in 1957, the passing of the National Defense Education Act in 1958, and the creation of the Vocational Education Act in 1963. Before Congress passed both the Civil Rights Act and the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964, approximately four million college students were enrolled in U.S. colleges/universities.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act along with the Higher Education Act, both passed in 1965, allowed more federal funds for public schools. In 1966, the GI Bill's educational benefits were extended to allow veterans of the war in Southeast Asia to take advantage of them. In 1972, both the Indian Education Act and the Title IX Education Amendment (outlawing discrimination on the basis of sex) provided avenues for schools to serve the needs of yet more underserved populations. These were followed closely by Public Law 94-142 in 1974, requiring school districts to provide education for handicapped and special needs students. In 1979, the federal Department of Education was created, and in 1980, the U.S. Secretary of Education became a cabinet position, providing

national leadership for the many existing and rapidly expanding educational programs.

Wow! A lot had happened (and this is just the tip of the iceberg) since schools first appeared in 2000 B.C., and it has continued to happen ever since. Schools have not always evolved in a linear fashion, and, in fact, to those who have been engaged in the education profession for any length of time, the evolution seems to be more like a pendulum swinging back and forth throughout educational history.

And the pendulum continues to swing . . . The book entitled *Lessons of a Century: A Nation's Schools Come of Age*[6] provides examples of the "big rocks" to remember:

- Compulsory education became widespread.
- Equal access to education was addressed.
- The GI Bill evolved into many forms of financial aid for higher education.
- Schools were charged with making "moral Americans".
- Public education became free and appropriate for all.
- Schools began to distinguish between college preparatory and vocational education.
- Adolescence emerged as a separate developmental stage.
- Schools began dealing with social issues (but numerous issues remained unresolved).
- Race and social class became major issues for public schools (starting with African-Americans).
- Other races and cultures joined in the struggle against discrimination.
- Courts became actively involved in school business.
- Debates centered on child-centered versus subject-centered education.
- Schools tried to meet the needs of the student.
- The debate continued about what and how students should be taught.
- Control swung between local communities, states, and the federal government.

- Education was seen as critical to the success of a democratic society.
- Standards-based teaching called for changes in educational structure.
- Technology became a powerful force in instruction.
- Educational tests became "big business".
- Standardized tests were seen as inappropriate and unfair.
- Educators continued to search for the perfect instruments to use in instruction.
- Teacher unions became a major force in the field.
- Political battles decided outcomes of educational issues.
- Private and independent schools saw a strong rebirth of interest and enrollment.
- Home schooling saw rapid growth.
- Vouchers became a controversial topic.
- Many options were made available by which parents could educate their children.
- Parents and students became consumers/customers that schools needed to please.
  - And yet the central questions and the fundamental acts of teaching remained unchanged . . . Good teaching was seen as good teaching, and connections were made between good schools and well-prepared teachers!!!

Theorists Laying the Groundwork for the "Big Rocks" (A Hall of Fame)

Although John Dewey (1859 – 1952) was probably the most influential theorist in American Education, there are many others who helped lay the groundwork for the development of American Education. Taken as a group, they make quite a notable Education Hall of Fame.[2, 7] A productive activity would be to discuss the evolution of learning theory based on the thoughts of theorists who might be considered for membership in such a Hall of Fame.

The first step would be to spend some time discovering a bit about the 50 theorists listed below, answering three questions for as many of them as possible:

- What were the main contributions of each theorist to educational thought/theory?
- How can these contributions be applied to learning theory and/or the evolution of America's public schools?
- Do you agree or disagree with the nomination of this person to an "Education Hall of Fame" (and WHY)?

When the above questions have been answered, an attempt should be made to place these people in an approximate chronological order, and a group discussion could then take place regarding the evolution of educational thought, how the theorists built upon those who came before them, and the worthiness of each person to enter the Education Hall of Fame.

Theorists to Consider

John Dewey
Frances Willard
Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Plato
Maxine Greene
Howard Gardner
Emma Hart Willard
Aristotle
Diane Ravitsch
Daniel Goleman
Martin Luther
William Glasser
Jean Piaget
Jane Addams
Parker Palmer
Herbert R. Kohl
Margaret Mead
B. F. Skinner
Charlotte Danielson
Prudence Crandall
Benjamin Bloom
Henry Barnard
Nel Noddings
Jack Mezirow
Abraham Maslow
Maria Montessori
Linda Darling-Hammond
James Stronge
Mary McLeod Bethune
Albert Bandura
Lev Vygotsky
Marian Wright Edelman
Noah Webster
A. S. Neill
Catherine Beecher
Alfie Kohn

John Locke	Jerome Bruner
David A. Kolb	Friedrich Froebel
Paulo Reglus Neves Friere	Milo Cutter
Johann Pestalozzi	John Amos Comenius
Rachel Carson	Horace Mann
Socrates	John Holt
Booker T. Washington	Madeline Hunter

Who else could you consider adding to potential membership in the Hall of Fame? One can easily see there are not as many women as men in this list. The reason for this is the historically sexist nature of American society and society's reflection on the development of American education. American education has been dominated by men through the years, especially since many early efforts at education concentrated primarily on the education of boys, with thoughts that it was better to prepare girls for domestic duties. Although women have long been impactful in American education, it has only been relatively recently that women have caught up and have taken their appropriate place as educational leaders on the national stage.

FOCUSSING QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Who were some of the best/worst educators/schools you have experienced, and why do you classify them as such?

What are some examples of how the pendulum has swung from your perspective?

What can we do to continue the development of women as educational leaders?

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT IS A CURRICULUM?

"Curriculum is the sum total of a school's efforts to influence learning."
—Margaret Laughlin

Curriculum is what provides a clear picture of the desired instructional outcomes and the path to take in order for learners to reach the outcomes desired by the teacher. Curriculum is the compass which helps guide teachers toward instructional effectiveness with their students. Teachers should not be expected to build their own personal curriculum as a guide for their instruction, but it is important for a curriculum to be in place before instruction begins. The curriculum, whatever the content area, is best constructed by means of the efforts of many knowledgeable, experienced educators. Effective teachers do not *teach* the curriculum; they *deliver* the curriculum that has been designed and put in place by others. Teachers, in a productive school, are presented with the curriculum to *deliver*, and it is their job to guide students toward the destinations designated by that established curriculum. The curriculum is, indeed, fundamental . . . In the words of Allan Ornstein, "The most fundamental concern of schooling is curriculum."[8] Without a curriculum to serve as a compass, even the most knowledgeable teachers will not meet with consistent success.[2]

Curriculum should be based on something called *backward design*. This means teachers should start at the end of the instructional process and work backward to determine exactly what students should be able to DO upon completion of the learning experience. A curriculum, to be most effective, does not need to provide an effective teacher with a precise instructional recipe; it should be the **what** of instruction rather than the **how**.[2]

Imbedded into the curriculum should be a series of *instructional objectives* for the teacher and *learning objectives* for the student. These are not the same as *speaking objectives* and are not the same as *goals*. While goals are the overarching target(s) at which the lesson is aiming, objectives are measureable, specific things the students should be able to DO upon completion of the instruction. They should be concerned with the performance of the learner rather than the presentation of the teacher. Sometimes referred to as *outcomes* or *competencies*, objectives are important because it is critical for teachers to know specifically WHAT and WHY something is going to be taught BEFORE instruction is planned or implemented. Only when instructional destinations are understood, can teachers select and arrange productive learning experiences for their students.[2]

Teaching without learning objectives for students is sort of like planning a trip without a destination in mind or constructing a factory without knowing what the factory will produce. As Robert Mager has said, "Without a blueprint, the finest materials and most skillful artisans wouldn't be able to create the house of your dreams."[9]

Learning objectives should be specific and should describe exactly what learners should be able to DO when they reach the destination intended by the curriculum. They should be *measureable* and are most helpful to teachers and students when they describe student outcomes which can be *seen* or *heard.* Productive objectives are best written by using *doing* words (i.e. action verbs), and must be re-worded until they clearly describe exactly what the teacher expects the student to learn. It is critical for both teachers and students to be aware of the learning destinations so everyone knows when these destinations have been reached. Clear objectives will also enable a teacher to select the instructional procedures which will best help to facilitate the desired student learning.[2]

Examples of words to avoid in writing objectives, because they cannot be seen, heard, or accurately measured, include:

- Know
- Think

- Believe
- Like
- Feel
- Enjoy
- Appreciate
- Understand
- Comprehend

Better words to use when writing objectives, because they will allow student learning to seen, heard, and measured, include:

- List
- Label
- State
- Complete
- Identify
- Measure
- Construct
- Write
- Recite

It is best to begin objectives with a phrase like "the student will be able to", so that the objectives are seen as *learning* objectives (for the student) rather than *speaking* objectives (for the teacher). They should always describe some aspect of the learner's performance, rather than some aspect of the instructor's performance.

Examples of effective objectives are:

- *The student will be able to* list at least three benefits of recycling pop cans.
- *The student will be able to* label all parts of a bean seed.
- *The student will be able to* state the correct steps to take in shooting a free throw.

Always remember that objectives can only be measureable if the teacher can see or hear what the student has learned or not learned during the course of the lesson or activity. In order to be effective, they must describe student behavior by allowing the students to be able show what they can DO after the instruction has taken place.

The number of objectives needed depends on the complexity and the length of the instructional activity. Teachers need to write as many objectives as it takes to communicate ALL instructional results that are considered to be important. Before teachers turn to the task of implementing the actual instruction and determining how the knowledge gaps of the learners will be assessed, ALL objectives should be clearly written so they can be understood by both teacher and student.

Only after the objectives are written in a manner allowing them to be clearly communicated should teachers ask themselves these questions:

- What specific techniques and strategies can best be used to meet the learning needs of the learners?
- What resources might best help the learners reach the desired objectives?

Usually it is a good idea to share the objectives with the students before the actual instruction begins, but teachers may allow learners to discover some of the objectives during the course of the instruction in an approach known as *discovery learning*. Leading students to discovering "teachable moments" throughout the course of instruction can sometimes help teachers in developing self-directed learners and can be a factor in helping to build student motivation.

Also included in the curriculum should be a plan for how teachers expect to know if the intended learning has taken place. This is known as *assessment*, and it will be addressed in a future chapter, but for now let it be said that assessment should be addressed in the curriculum document as a means for providing evidence of whether or not students have met the curriculum objectives. This is important because before instruction begins,

teachers should have a good idea of how they will know if the instruction has been successful.

What Are Standards?

Standards for student learning are points of guidance established at a state or national level, to provide emphasis on similar concepts for students from one state to another or across the entire nation, and to demonstrate what the state or country considers to be essential for all students to learn. They are simply expectations against which individual student achievement and progress can be judged. They should be addressed and placed locally within a curriculum, and should never be considered as a substitute for a district's or school's curriculum document, since curriculum is something to be developed at a local level. Rather, standards are something to be reflected in the curriculum objectives in an attempt for all graduates to have the skills and knowledge deemed necessary to succeed in the future. Standards should never replace curriculum; standards should be embedded in the curriculum already established locally. Anyone who ignores the local curriculum and "teaches to the standards" demonstrates a misunderstanding of the intent of standards and the purpose of curriculum. School districts, schools, and teachers should always decide how students are to be taught. Standards should be *adapted* instead of being *adopted* by local educators.

FOCUSSING QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Why is it important for schools and teachers to decide how students are taught?

Why should curriculum be based on *backward design?*

CHAPTER FOUR

DELIVERY OF CURRICULUM

"When the only tool you have is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail."
—Abraham Maslow

The content addressed by a curriculum can be delivered to the learners in many ways. It should be remembered, however, that the content is best *uncovered* for students rather than *covered*. Covering the content will lead to exposure, not necessarily to learning, but uncovering content will lead to understanding because the learners will be forced to think about the information being delivered by their teachers. In other words, if content is uncovered, students will be put in the position where they will have to DO something with it, and when learners DO something with new information, they will more likely to become more effective learners, as those who DO more will always learn more! Thus, a teacher who facilitates learning will be more effective than one who simply talks about stuff.

Lectures and the use of textbooks are two of the more traditional/common ways in which teaching takes place. Lectures are the most efficient way to deliver large amounts of information to large groups of people. The speaker prepares a single lecture and delivers it one time to many students at the same time. However, in a typical lecture scenario, the students are usually engaged in a passive instead of an active mode. While teachers are doing the talking, students are expected to listen and absorb the knowledge of the expert in the field. Lectures can be a beneficial piece of instruction when surrounded by a variety of other strategies, so if you are going to give a lecture, make it a good one.