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HARRY K. WONG
ROSEMARY T. WONG

FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER



WE TEACH YOU TO PLAN SO YOU CAN PLAN TO TEACH

**THE FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL
HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER**

**HARRY K. WONG
ROSEMARY T. WONG**

Some people go into teaching because it is a job. Some people go into teaching to make a difference. We are pleased to share with the teaching profession our contribution to making a difference.

HARRY K. WONG PUBLICATIONS, INC.

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Dedication

Dedicated to my father and mother,

Who wanted me to be a brain surgeon.

I exceeded their expectations.

I became a scholar and a teacher.

—Harry K. Wong

Dedicated to Mr. Frederick McKee,

My first principal, whose evaluation of me said

I needed better "classroom management" skills.

Thank you for telling me I needed to improve my skills.

I did. It worked!

—Rosemary T. Wong

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Unit A

Basic Understandings _The Teacher

The successful teacher must know and practice the three characteristics of an effective teacher.

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Unit A is correlated with Part 1: “The Effective Teacher” in the DVD series *The Effective Teacher*.

CHAPTER 1

Why You Need to Succeed on the First Days of School

THE KEY IDEA:

Your success during the school year will be determined by what you do on the first days of school.

Success on the First Day of School

Successful teachers have a script or a plan ready for the first day of school.

What you do on the first days of school will determine your success or failure for the rest of the school year. Knowing how to structure a successful first day of school will set the stage for an effective classroom and a successful school year.

College professor Douglas Brooks videotaped a series of teachers on their first day of school. Looking at the recording afterward, he made a startling discovery. The ineffective teachers began their first day of school by covering the subject matter or doing a fun activity. These teachers spent the rest of the school year chasing after the students.

The effective teachers spent time organizing and structuring their classrooms so the students knew what to do to succeed. He wrote his findings in an article, “The First Day of School.” (Brooks, Douglas M. (May 1985). “The First Day of School.” *Educational Leadership*, pp. 76–78.)

The most important thing to establish in the first week of school is **CONSISTENCY**. People want to know exactly what they are getting and what will be happening. Students do not want surprises or disorganization. Consistency prevents them from asking, “What are we doing today?”

Students want a safe, predictable, and nurturing environment—one that is

consistent. 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 actions in a consistent classroom environment.

Effective teachers teach classroom management procedures that create consistency. Their classrooms are caring, thought-provoking, challenging, and academically successful. A well-managed classroom is the foundation for learning in the classroom. Therefore, Unit C in this book may be the most important for you to read and implement as you start the first days of school.

Effective teachers have lesson plans and procedures that produce student learning. Unit D in this book will walk you through how to get your students to achieve.

[*Click to read the Sidebar story: Hand in the Work*](#)

[*Please read this link about Going Beyond information*](#)

Effective Teachers Script Their First Day of School

A coach scripts the first 10 to 20 plays of a football game. A wedding coordinator has a plan or agenda for the sequence of events at a wedding. Likewise, an effective teacher is ready with a script or classroom management plan on the first day of school.

Diana Greenhouse, a teacher in Texas, says, “What an incredible first year of teaching this has been. When I look back at all I accomplished, it takes my breath away. My students learned and I loved every minute of teaching.

“And it all started with that very first minute of the first day. I started the school with a PowerPoint presentation of my classroom management plan.”

Kazim Cicek, a teacher in Oklahoma, says he spent his first three years in the profession as a warrior. The students fought him and he fought them. Then, four days before the start of his fourth year—one that he did not

want to start—he heard Harry Wong speak at a preschool meeting and had a “light bulb moment.” Over a long weekend, he created a PowerPoint presentation of his classroom management plan.

At the end of his fourth year he said, “The wish I wished my students was also given to me. I, too, had a wonderful year.”

Today, he is a very happy and successful teacher.

[Click to read the Sidebar story: teachers.net](#)

[Click for GoBe folder information: Classroom Management Plans](#)

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 very reassuring to your students that you know what you are doing.

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.

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

[Click to read the Sidebar story: Don't Be a Pal](#)

Effective Teachers Produce Results

The subtitle of this book is “How to Be an Effective Teacher.” Effective means “to effect,” “to produce results.”

When you interact with people, such as a plumber, salesperson, dentist, or

lawyer, you expect that person to be effective—to produce results. Likewise, the effective teacher is someone who can produce learning.

To be effective, a person is firstly proficient. **Proficient** refers to someone who continually acquires knowledge and skills to, in turn, be able to teach effectively.

PROFICIENT: possessing knowledge and skills

EFFECTIVE: to produce results

The **EFFECTIVE** teacher **IMPACTS** lives.

The Four Stages of Teaching

There are four stages to teaching, yet many teachers never progress beyond the Survival stage. (Ryan, Kevin. (1986). *The Induction of New Teachers*. Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa.) The purpose of *The First Days of School* is to get you out of stage two, Survival, and on to the third stage, Mastery, so you can be the difference in the lives of your students.

The Four Stages of Teaching

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

Stage 1—Fantasy. Many neophyte teachers have the naïve belief that to be a successful teacher, all they need to do is relate and be a friend to their students. They rarely talk about standards, assessment, or student achievement. Entertaining students with activities is their concept of teaching.

Stage 2—Survival. Teachers in the Survival stage have not developed instructional skills as explained in Unit D. They spend their time looking for busywork for the students to do, such as completing worksheets, watching videos, and doing seatwork—anything to keep the students quiet. Student learning and achievement are not their goals; they teach because it's a job and the paycheck is their Survival goal.

Stage 3—Mastery. Teachers who know how to achieve student success employ effective practices. These teachers know how to manage their classrooms. They teach for mastery, and have high expectations for their students. Effective teachers strive for Mastery by reading the literature and

going to professional meetings. Student learning is their mission and student achievement is their Mastery goal.

Stage 4—Impact. Effective teachers make a difference in the lives of their students. These are the teachers to whom students come back years later and 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. A student learns only when the teacher has an appreciable impact on the 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.

Impact

Teachers universally say they go into teaching to make a difference. You more than make a difference. You ARE the difference.

[**Click to read the Sidebar story: It's Never Too Late**](#)

Effective Teachers Impact Lives

Teachers who are proficient and effective are more capable of impacting the lives of students than teachers who are not proficient and effective.

The effective teacher knows how to bring the class to order quickly, explain rules and procedures, find out important information about the students, and let them know what to expect in the coming days. The next chapters will teach you these skills.

Relationships are created in an effectively run classroom. There is a trusting relationship between an effective teacher and the students.
Finding out about the students is important in an effectively run classroom.

You were hired to impact lives. You were hired not so much to teach third grade, or 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, close the windows, staple all the papers, and turn cartwheels to please you.

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

THE EFFECTIVE TEACHER

1. Uses a script to organize the class the first week of school.
2. Continually acquires knowledge and skills.
3. Produces results.
4. Impacts and touches lives.

CHAPTER 2

What Is an Effective Teacher?

THE KEY IDEA:

The beginning teacher must become proficient in the three characteristics of an effective teacher.

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. (Good, Thomas L., and Jere Brophy. (2007). *Looking in Classrooms*. Needham, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, pp. 8, 9, 12, 47, 71, and 301.) These characteristics are known, and you can easily learn how to be a very effective teacher.

Teaching is a craft, a highly skilled craft that can be learned!

What works in a kindergarten classroom or a high school classroom also works with modification in any other classroom.

The teacher with an ineffective classroom is constantly looking for activities to grab the students' attention. They are eager to present their lessons, do their exciting activities, and share their wonderful knowledge. But, none of these techniques will be successful until you become skilled in the characteristics of an effective teacher. Teaching is not covering chapters or doing activities.

It's not what you put in; it's the outcome you get from the students.

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.

Research consistently shows that of all the factors schools can control, the effective teacher has the greatest impact on student achievement.

Decade after decade of educational innovations and fads have not increased student achievement. **The only factor that increases student achievement is the significance of an effective teacher.**

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 research, which demonstrates that the learner will produce what the teacher expects the learner to produce. If you believe a student is a low-level, below-average, slow learner, the student will perform accordingly because these are the beliefs you transmit to the student. If you believe a student is a high-ability, above-average, capable learner, the student will perform at that level because these are the expectations you transmit to the student.

It is essential that the teacher exhibit positive expectations toward all students. Unit B discusses ways to convey positive expectations and explains the importance of positive expectations, an attitude that benefits the teacher and the student, as well as the overall classroom environment.

Classroom Management

Classroom management consists of the 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 create a well-ordered environment.

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 effectiveness of such an environment is the result of how well the teacher learns the skill of managing the classroom.**

[Click for GoBe folder information: Close to a Miracle](#)

[Click to read the Sidebar story: Students Work Without the Teacher Present](#)

Lesson Mastery

Mastery refers to how well a student can demonstrate that a concept has been comprehended, or perform a skill at a level of proficiency, as determined by the teacher. Unit D explains how to teach for mastery.

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.

Well-Ordered Environment + Positive Academic Expectations = Effective Classroom

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

1. Know how to design lessons in which a student will be able to learn a concept or a skill to a goal or standard.
2. Know how to deliver the instruction to teach to the goal or standard.
3. Know how to assess and provide corrective action for learning so the student can master the concept or the skill.

Student success in the subject matter of the class depends on how well the teacher designs lessons and checks for mastery.

THE EFFECTIVE TEACHER

1. Exhibits positive expectations for all students.

2. Establishes good classroom management techniques.
3. Designs lessons for student mastery.

CHAPTER 3

How You Can Be a Happy First-Year Teacher

THE KEY IDEA:

The beginning teacher must perform the full complement of skills while learning those skills.

The First Year Can Be Successful

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

It's really not stealing. It's really 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.

We are in a community of equals, not a community of experts. We are members of a common community. Don't be afraid to ask and learn. Through mutual support and sharing, we improve our profession.

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.**

[Click to read the Sidebar story: The First Year of Teaching Is the Most Crucial](#)

Teacher Education Will Not Have Prepared You

The schools of education are not to be blamed. No one ever said that education ends with a college degree. Some people enter teaching by way of an alternative certification route. Regardless, 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; participating in staff development 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

Your master teacher is not to be blamed. No one ever trained your master teacher in what to teach you. 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. Thus, most student teachers enter the teaching profession with no training and no experience in what to do on the first day of school.

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.
-

Some Districts Have Induction Programs to Prepare You

In teaching, entry into the profession can be sudden. In the business world, new employees receive comprehensive training from day one, allowing them to gradually gain knowledge, experience, and responsibility until retirement.

Have you ever wondered why your seemingly problem students do so well at a local store or fast-food restaurant? Restaurants such as McDonald's and Domino's Pizza have sophisticated training programs to prepare workers before they face the public. Go behind the scenes at any place of business and you will see workers in training reviewing videos, reading instruction manuals, and learning various aspects of their jobs. **Effective districts and schools, likewise, have a training or comprehensive induction program for all newly hired teachers.**

Regretfully, in some schools, newly hired teachers are merely given a key to a room and told to go teach, leaving you to

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.

What will really prepare you for teaching in your district is an organized new teacher induction program. Induction is a structured multi-year program that will train and support you as you become an effective teacher. To learn more about induction, go to NewTeacher.com and read many of the articles on the website. Also, read *New Teacher Induction: How to Train, Support, and Retain New Teachers*. (Breux, Annette, and Harry K. Wong. (2003). *New Teacher Induction: How to Train, Support, and Retain New Teachers*. Mountain View, Calif.: Harry K. Wong Publications, Inc.)

Attention New Teachers: If you are a new teacher looking for a teaching job, you need to ask if the district has an induction program. Do not sign a contract until you ask. Districts with induction programs care that you succeed. This entails more than simply giving you a mentor.

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. It's the training a district gives to bring out the teacher you are meant to be. Please do not be so naïve to think that you can succeed on your own without help.

[Click for GoBe folder information: 10 Questions to Ask](#)

You Will Be Expected to Perform Immediately

When you become a first-year teacher, you will be an equal with all the other teachers. You will have the same students they teach, you will teach from the same curriculum, and you will have the same administrators. You will have the same duties and responsibilities as all the other teachers.

Yet, 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 you recognize that becoming an effective teacher is a never-ending learning process.

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

Education is not a product; it is a never-ending process. The purpose of this book is to give you some insight, ideas, and choices about how to start your first days of school. Note the word, “choices.” The quality of the choices you make today will dictate the quality of your opportunities tomorrow.

There are no pat answers in education, no simple answers, no quick-fixes, no sure model, no foolproof methods. There are teachers, who become effective because they make teaching a profession and not a job. **They continue to learn, and from their fund of knowledge they make choices about each appropriate strategy they should use.**

Your whole life is ahead of you, and it can be filled with happiness and success. If you want positive results from your professional career, know that your colleagues are your best resource.

Work in a collegial manner with your colleagues.

Associate with and learn from positive mentors and coaches.

Join a professional organization.

Continue to learn through classes, workshops, conferences, professional meetings, books, journals, CDs, DVDs, the Internet, and advanced degrees.

[Click for GoBe folder information: Websites](#)

You now have the rest of the school year and your professional years ahead of you to truly enjoy. You can be a happy, successful, and exciting teacher.

Inside Every Great Teacher there is an even better one waiting to come out.

[Click to read the Sidebar story: You Can Have Any Job in Education in Three to Five Years With a Raise in Salary of 25 Percent or More](#)

THE EFFECTIVE TEACHER

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

CHAPTER 4

How to Close the Student Achievement Gap

THE KEY IDEA:

The effectiveness of the teacher determines the level of student achievement.

The Importance of Effective Teachers

The greatest asset of a school is its people.

School does not begin until the teacher walks into the classroom. It is the teacher—what the teacher knows and can do—that is the most significant factor in student achievement. **The more effective the teacher, the more successful the students.**

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 the ineffective teacher will be effective—instantly.

Successful teachers are innovative planners, exceptional classroom managers, adept critical thinkers, and competent problem solvers. Successful people MAKE themselves do the things unsuccessful people will not do.

Ineffective teachers look for busywork to kill class time. They are survivors. They whine that nothing useful ever applies to them, fully expecting others to tell them what to do.

The effective teacher is a creative teacher—one who can think, adapt, 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.