

# Introduction

**B**ecause both of us have had so many years of teaching experience, we thought we had some ideas that would help new teachers become effective, and even help those who had been around a while and needed to be rejuvenated. We had “been there, done that,” and it just seemed to us that it would be great if some of the forgotten pedagogy that we had taught in our education classes could be revisited in a compact little guide book. We coupled practical experience with these emphases from pedagogical skills. Anyone reading the book would know that we cared. After all, we were teachers long before we were professors.

So much criticism has been leveled at public education and how it is not meeting the needs of students. Those who criticize surely must understand that education is an evolving profession. As we learn more about teaching and learning, our practice grows and changes. Sometimes the changes are good and will show immediate improvement. Sometimes they take time, and improvement comes slowly. Sometimes the things we try are not effective, and they have to be abandoned. We have sifted through many such items and have filled this book with what we feel are the most effective, useful pedagogical skills.

The purpose of this book is to share the most exciting things we could about teaching. We wanted to help anticipate some questions you would face as a new teacher and to give you practical advice for making the first years of teaching successful.

With that in mind, we began talking about our book and our ideas to our own students. They said that in our pedagogy and professional education classes we had been talking about authenticity and empowerment, and they thought that our book idea sounded real enough and practical enough to be authentic. They thought that having a guide such as our book would help empower

## xiv MAKING YOUR FIRST YEAR A SUCCESS

them to be effective teachers. We liked their use of *authentic* and *empowerment*, two items on which we had spent so much time in class.

In multiple conversations with our students, one took the old Chinese proverb about teaching a man to fish and rephrased it as a statement about teaching. We had heard it many times over the years, but it still makes sense and is excellent material for making a middle school and secondary teacher effective. He wrote, "I want to teach because I have always heard that if you tell me, I will forget it; if you show me, I will remember; if you involve me, I will understand."

One of them compared a teacher to a savior,

I want to be a part of education because I know that education can save the world. It won't make all of those we are about to teach geniuses, but we may change just one of their lives, and then that one may make such an impact that he or she will change the world.

One commented that teaching was

not a profession that you can leave at your workplace. It is so enjoyable that you make it both your profession and your hobby. When you think of teaching as a hobby, then you go to school every day thinking what fun it is to spend the day playing at your hobby. I want to go to work to play every day!

Their comments stirred our souls, and that is why we wanted to make them a guidebook for being effective. We offer it to you. We hope you can find some ideas that will help our newfound "hobby" bring you all the joy it has brought us.

We have learned that every teacher must have a plan, a guideline to bring that goal into some semblance of being. We feel that this new edition can help teachers in creating a plan of getting off to a good start. Yes, there are other ways to achieve this goal, and those other ways can work, too, if one is willing to put heart and soul into the effort of making ideas work. We have just articulated some thoughts on what has worked for us over the years. We have enhanced some thoughts, upgraded some thoughts, and rethought some thoughts. We trust we still have an easy-to-follow roadmap for

a successful beginning for you to become a good teacher. We want to keep you in the profession, and we want you to be happy in it.

In this new edition, we told a few more actual stories to illustrate our points. We tightened up any references to theory because we wanted the book to be theory based, but we still wanted it to be a practical approach, not just theoretical. We updated using our approach to meet the expectations of *No Child Left Behind*. We updated our chapter on technology even though technology changes so rapidly that no book can keep absolutely current with those challenges. We added differentiation in the classroom and in lesson planning. We connected better to curriculum standards issued by the district, the state, and the national organizations, and gave you some ideas of how to achieve them using our guide. We recognized the need for more rigorous discussion on handling classroom management, and we reacted to those needs.

There is no panacea, no pill to make everything work the way that we think it should. We wish that we could just give you an ironclad rule instead of your having to take some of what we have said in the book and apply it to your needs as they arise. We do know that if you follow our thoughts, you will not be a failure. You may not be the “teacher of the year” your first year in the field, but you could be. The book is designed to renew ideas for those who have been teaching some time and who may need some reminders of the importance of being revitalized in their zeal for their profession. All of us can become complacent, so a little boost of new energy cannot be harmful.

Whatever we have achieved, we just wish you the best in whichever capacity you use the book. Know that we have believed and practiced these applications over our careers, and we have felt success and joy in our profession.