
Preface

In the five years since this book was first published, it has sold close to 25,000 copies and has been a prominent resource for many induction and mentor programs throughout the United States. Clearly the need for useful research-based strategies is stronger than ever before. Beginning and veteran teachers have provided positive feedback regarding the ease of access to current educational research that this book allows. In addition, many teachers have commented anecdotally on our easy-to-read format and the utility of the information we've included.

When we wrote the first edition of this book, the teaching profession faced a dilemma of monumental proportions. In 2003 it was estimated that 2 million new teachers would be needed nationwide. Research predicted that 50% of new teachers would not continue after three to five years in the profession. Seventeen percent were not expected to last even one year. Little has changed since then. Research also indicates that teachers don't really learn their craft until they have been teaching at least five to six years. It takes that long for beginning teachers to experiment with and adapt the rules and procedures they must employ in their classroom, to develop and refine lesson plans, and to embrace a sense of community and camaraderie with their students and colleagues. Further, we know that good teachers continually strive to improve their own professional growth by attending conferences and inservices, collaborating with colleagues, and keeping up with the latest professional journals. Bridging the gap between the crucial need for teachers yet expecting excellence in teaching is the challenge facing educators, school districts, and institutes of higher education. We hope this book will serve as a resource for beginning teachers and veterans alike, as they develop and polish the skills that will define them as educators throughout their professional careers.

While many new and veteran teachers receive advice and support from mentors, veteran colleagues, and induction programs, this book's intent is to bring the reader methodologies based on educational research findings. This book is not meant to be read as one would read a novel, but

rather used as one would refer to an information guide. Our objective is to focus on useful and practical educational research that translates into a range of choices and solutions to individual teaching and learning problems. Within these chapters we present a wide range of instructional strategies and suggestions based on educational, psychological, and sociological studies. The strategies are based on research done with preservice, student, beginning, and experienced teachers.

Strategies within the chapters are structured in the following user-friendly format:

- *The Strategy*—a simple, concise, or crisp statement of an instructional strategy
- *What the Research Says*—a brief discussion of the research that led to the strategy providing the reader with a deeper understanding of the principle(s) discussed
- *Classroom Applications*—a description of how this teaching strategy can be used in instructional settings
- *Precautions and Possible Pitfalls*—caveats intended to help teachers avoid common difficulties before they occur
- *Sources*—provided so the reader may refer to the original research

We feel teachers may benefit from the practical classroom applications based on the research findings. Our hope is that our work can provide advice and support regarding many facets of teaching that can be especially troublesome. The strategies provide reality-based suggestions to strengthen and support classroom theory and practical application.

It is our hope that if beginning teachers accept some of these ideas, maybe they can avoid the “baptism by fire” that many teachers experience when they first start teaching. Veteran teachers can also benefit from the knowledge gained from recent research. Given the critical need for teachers now and in the future, we, as a profession, cannot afford to have potentially good teachers leaving the profession because they don’t feel supported, they’re too overwhelmed, or they suffer from burnout.

If you are a beginning teacher reading this book for the first time, there may be strategies that don’t apply. As in any new endeavor, as a beginning teacher, you might “not know what you don’t know.” We ask that you come back and revisit this book from time to time throughout the year. What may not be applicable the first time you read it may be of help at a later date. Veteran teachers can refresh their teaching toolbox by scanning the range of strategies presented in the book to apply to their own teaching environment.

Teaching, and education in general, has never been more exciting or more challenging. Expectations for teachers, students, and schools continue to rise. The more resources teachers have at their fingertips to assist students along the educational journey, the better the outcome. Hopefully, teachers will find this book useful and practical in defining and enhancing their teaching skills.