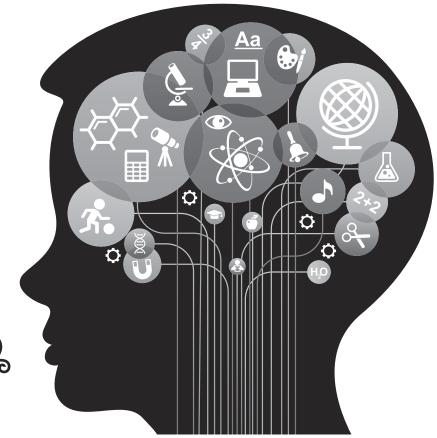
BULDING Better LEARNES

Bringing Out the Potential in Every Student

By the Authors of THE MASTER TEACHER Weekly Pd PROGRAM





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Introduction

We are all striving to build our repertoire of skills so we are the very best educators we can be. No doubt this takes considerable effort, because it is no small undertaking and every day presents countless challenges.

Equally, we must be building the skills of our students as lifelong learners. It is predicted that this generation of learners will change careers (not jobs) five times in the course of their professional work lives. Just think about that for a moment—five career changes! This means today's students will have to be willing and able to learn five different skillsets over the course of a lifetime, and be flexible and adaptive learners within those different career paths. They will also have to be effective and efficient problem solvers, both independent and collaborative thinkers, and very disciplined in the way they approach work learning challenges.

Becoming better learners requires both time and patience. It requires working through frustration and learning strategies to employ so as not to give up when learning gets hard or complicated. Students need to be able to take what they know about learning in one context and apply it in an unfamiliar way or new circumstance. And they have to be able to learn from one another and collaborate to bring about successful outcomes. For these reasons and more, we are providing you with the hundreds of strategies in this book.

After each lesson you will find a Personal Learning Journal. We encourage you to use these journaling pages to reflect upon the ideas and strategies you glean from each lesson. We also encourage you to share and discuss what you learn with your colleagues to gain even more insights into the important challenge of building better learners.

CHAPTER 1

The Child Killer... Discouragement

It is a painful way for a child to die. Just tell a child what he or she can't do well, remind him or her continually that he or she is inadequate in certain areas and situations, or give him or her a look of disapproval—and you begin his or her climbing the steps toward discouragement.

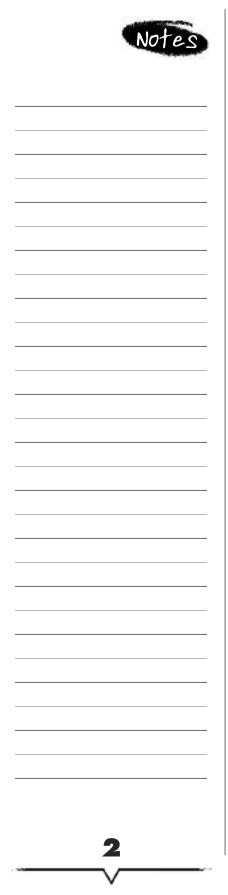
A teacher must know the effects of discouragement well. They not only affect the lives of students but also determine teacher success. Using discouragement as a tool in teaching puts the seal of death on any possible teaching success. It's a fact: Discouragement is one of the primary causes of all the deficiencies and failures of students. Worse, before a student fails, he or she often loses his or her confidence to achieve by acceptable standards.

Make no mistake: If a student cannot succeed in a way that is approved, he or she will vie for attention no matter what the route. Without doubt, students pay a high price for unacceptable behavior, and they are willing to pay this price only because they sense the acceptable choices are not open to them. They come to believe this because they have tried these "acceptable roads" and they led nowhere for them. In effect, they believe they have no other choice.

Discouragement is the cause of unacceptable behavior.

As teachers, we should realize that the change to unacceptable behavior is the most common consequence of discouragement. Most of us are aware of the high price students pay for success. We realize and appreciate the tremendous effort many students make to be good students, become student leaders, or excel in extra-class activities. But what we know, yet really don't accept, is the fact that for every

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student who finds success, there are many who honestly see no such chance.

Often these students become school discipline problems. When a switch from activity to activity brings repeated discouragement, their desperation makes them hunt other possibilities to be a somebody. They seize any opportunity to gain power, feel important, and be admired by their peers. Faulty judgment leads them to think that all they have to do is defeat adults, including their teachers and parents, and a good way to do this is to violate every rule and command.

Don't think these students are weak. Students who use unacceptable behavior are strong. It takes stamina and strength to oppose acceptable behavior. Ask any juvenile judge or probation officer and they will tell you that juvenile offenders not only have strength of conviction, they also are often among our brightest and most capable young people. They won't give up. They persistently continue to violate acceptable rules of conduct. Psychologists tell us that they don't give up because they still believe they have a chance for success through unacceptable behavior. They have long ago given up on trying to be good. They are firmly convinced that acceptable behavior is beyond their grasp. With acceptable behavior, they not only fail, they are a nobody. They know this is true because it has been told and proven to them time and time again by their parents as well as their teachers. The record of their accomplishments attests to the fact that these adults are correct in their judgments.

Not all students turn to unacceptable behavior when failure results in a specific area. Rather, many find success with acceptable behavior by switching their interest to another area. But of paramount importance is the fact that even these students may have completely abandoned efforts in certain areas which will remain weaknesses for the rest of their lives—unless someone helps by encouragement. With discouragement, they will never find it.

Areas of limitations?

Some children believe that they can't learn math or woodwork or English before they have had a chance to begin learning. How can a student, barring a physical or mental liability, think he or she can't do something before he or she has time to try? Because people have told him or her so, that's why. Too many adults still erroneously believe that a student's abilities or talents are limited in certain fields.

Nonsense! Preference for some activities is more often the result of encouragement. How many things in your life are voids simply because of discouragement? Probably all the things you quit trying to do because you were discouraged before you learned how to do them.

We have all seen children go from A's to D's because of discouragement. We have witnessed students drop out of band, hate reading, quit trying to please a teacher, drop athletics, or fail English simply because of the child killer called discouragement.

Unfortunately, we have also seen teachers respond to these effects of discouragement with comments ranging from "I told you he couldn't do it" to "She doesn't have the character to give what it takes."

Regardless of our rationalizations, these are horrible responses to a discouraged young person.

See a situation through the eyes of a student.

The Master Teacher realizes that until we learn to identify discouragement when it appears and compensate for it immediately, a teacher can't help but continue to demoralize students. He or she knows that the warping of a student begins when discouragement sets in. It affects a student's self-concept. Discouragement eats the heart out of a student and leaves him or her with feelings of inferiority and incompetency, rendering him or her vulnerable. It makes such a student feel both timid and fearful. It saps strength and undermines both self-respect and dignity.

The Master Teacher realizes that it is not easy for a teacher to develop the basic ability to encourage a discouraged student. First, it takes a teacher who can see a situation through the eyes of a student in terms of the student's values and experience. Then, the teacher must recognize the student's potential. When he or she does, and teaches to that potential, teaching through encouragement is a natural result. Only when he or she begins to concentrate on the student's failures—on what he or she can't do—does a teaching plan of discouragement set in.

The challenge is teaching by encouragement rather than discouragement. The Master Teacher knows it can only be accomplished by teachers with the determination not to become discouraged themselves.

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Personal Learning Journal

This is your personal journal for building better learners. It focuses on a four-step learning process specifically designed to enhance lifetime learning. Every step is important. To actually acquire and remember knowledge, it's important to write what you learned as well as what you already knew. Likewise, it's essential to know what worked and didn't work—and to reflect. When reflection is followed by adjustments, that is, what you will do differently as well as when you will do it, long-term learning and improvement are enhanced.

Simply write your journal entry after reading each message, and apply what you've learned in the classroom. This journal will help you retain the material and provide you with notes to review at a later date.

I. Learning/Planning
a. What did I already know about this topic?
b. What did I learn that was new?
II. Action/Application
a. What did I do that worked?
b. What did I do that didn't work?
c. What did I <i>not</i> do—and what happened?
A

a. What will I do	with what I've learned from my experience?
b. What do I stil	I need to learn on this subject?
c. How can I get	this information?
IV. Change/	Adjustment of differently the next time?
b. When will I u	se what I've learned? (first day or week of school, before grade cards go out, etc.)
c. What impact of	do I think it will have on my students and/or colleagues?