



WELCOME

to Teaching
...and our Schools

By Robert L. DeBruyn

THE
MASTER TEACHER®
Develop • Support • Honor



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THE MASTER TEACHER®

Publisher

Leadership Lane

P.O. Box 1207

Manhattan, Kansas 66505-1207

Phone 800.669.9633 • Fax 800.669.1132

www.masterteacher.com

ISBN 0-914607-49-9

First Printing 1997

Printed in the United States of America

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DeBruyn is a powerful speaker who has worked extensively with students, teachers, and administrators through workshops and seminars, and as a keynote speaker in the areas of discipline, motivation, leadership and management. His messages reveal a deep commitment to children and a great respect for the work of teachers and administrators.

DeBruyn is a senior editor to *The Board*, a semimonthly training program for school board members. He is one of the creators of *Northstar for Principals*, a monthly publication for principals, and *Galileo for Superintendents*, a monthly publication for superintendents.

He has authored and co-authored numerous books, such as four prominent books on student behavior including *You Can Handle Them All*, two influential books on educational leadership including *Causing Others to Want Your Leadership...for Teachers*; and a leading book on teacher attitudes and traits: *Voices from the Field: What Is a Master Teacher?*

His contribution to education has been honored by induction into the Kansas Teacher Hall of Fame.

Other titles authored or co-authored:

Creating the Environment to Maximize Student Learning

THE MASTER TEACHER Assessment Handbook

THE MASTER TEACHER's Secrets for Deepening Learning for All Students

Personal Mentoring and Planning Guides:

The First 60 Days of Teaching

Keeping the Momentum Strong in the Critical Middle

Finishing Strong: the Last 60 Days of the School Year

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome! This is the beginning of your teaching career in this district. The way you begin will influence your professional future. We're glad you're here, and we wish you the best. We want to help ensure your good beginning, one that will lead to immediate and future success, just as we're sure you want to help students have the kind of beginning this year that will give them immediate and future success.

The first days of school have special significance because people remember the firsts in their lives. Both research and experience indicate that beginnings are a significant factor in the formation of lasting opinions and attitudes. *Firsts* are the things of which impressions, images, and memories are made. Remember your first date? Remember your first car? First party? First childhood friend? Firsts are the milestones that people most often remember. That's why the first days in class will be the ones that linger in the minds of students.

As you begin the year, you must realize students' reactions to learning and to school in general may be a reflection of teachers' attitudes. The entire school team must be prepared, in terms of attitude as well as subject matter, to be successful educators. We must be enthusiastically and willingly ready to meet the challenge of helping students win in school this year. If not, it will be a long, hard, and dull year for teachers and students alike.

Your future begins today. The future of your students begins today too—and you are responsible for both. You must lay the foundation for a successful future—for both yourself and your students—by presenting an image of yourself as a teacher who is a warm, friendly, caring human being, professionally competent to prepare young people for a better life. We wish you well. Your administrators are prepared to help you in any way possible. Their assistance is yours for the asking. The welfare of students is the fundamental concern of the entire school team. And you, as a teacher, are the vital element in the learning process. After all, it takes a quality teacher to give students a quality education. There is no research that supports anything to the contrary. If you're successful, students will be successful as well.

CHAPTER 1

THE FIVE OBJECTIVES

If you are to be an effective teacher, your lesson plans must include more than just the academic subjects your students will study. They must also include the basic objectives of the whole schooling process. That’s why, as professional educators, we all have a definite place to begin each school year—regardless of the grade or subject being taught. We might all learn a valuable lesson regarding beginning from those teachers who meet students entering kindergarten for the first time.

When children begin their education in kindergarten, teachers know meeting certain needs is paramount. That’s why they begin with five objectives firmly in mind. These five objectives are essentials:

- Assurance of self-worth.
- Opportunities to learn by doing.
- Interaction with others.
- Habits and attitudes that enable them to work at a task until it is completed.
- Flexibility to compensate for individual student needs, interests, abilities, and differences.

They are the basic ingredients of any teaching plan, no matter what grade or course you teach.

Assurance and opportunity for each and every student in your class

The first objective is the recognition that all students need *assurance of self-worth*. They are both liked and valued for themselves. This need has no age or grade boundaries—and can’t be dismissed or devalued by any professional teacher.

Assurance of self-worth is the foundation for helping each student fit into the school program, identify with learning, and strive to achieve to

his or her potential. You begin to meet this need when you welcome students to your classes and tell them—individually and collectively—that you are glad they are there. Being warm, friendly, and enthusiastic on the first day is the way to begin reaching this objective. A cold and rigid approach is never the appropriate professional technique, regardless of any teacher reasoning that may appear to justify it.

On the first day, you need to share with students specifically what you have planned for them to achieve, rather than emphasize what they can't do or what they are required to do. You can achieve this goal only by presenting yourself as a caring and helping partner in the learning process. If “making sure every student knows I'm the boss” is your first-day objective, you only lay the groundwork for student-teacher barriers, rather than for the openness and receptivity you need so very much in order to be an effective and a happy teacher.

Second, your teaching plan must offer students *opportunities to learn by doing*, rather than simply by listening. Classroom and lesson plan structure is necessary, but so is a teaching plan that does not chain students to a desk in a formal stand-up, sit-down, raise-your-hand conformity. In meeting this objective you reveal your teaching creativity. Your lessons must stimulate activity and involvement for all, not just the eager and the bright. You must extend to students the opportunity to try out their own ideas and develop self-expression.

Therefore, your teaching plan simply must provide your students with both an assurance of self-worth and an active role in learning. Herein lies a key to motivating students and making your teaching dynamic and relevant. This must be your starting point on the first day, as well as all the days that follow.

Giving, taking, and achieving: Lessons for the classroom—and for life

Third, students need *interaction with others* in order to learn how to give and take. This is a lesson they will use throughout life. None of us ever outgrow the need to find balance in life between giving and taking. That's why young people of all ages and all grades need to have the opportunity to work with others directly. A lesson plan that does not allow students interaction with both

teacher and classmates leaves out a valuable asset necessary for productive living.

Fourth, students must develop *habits and attitudes that enable them to work at a task until it is completed*. They must learn to work amid distractions. The world doesn't stop or even slow down just to make it easier for people to get their jobs done. Students are not the exception to this reality of life. Interference and distractions are the norm in the classroom as well as in the world of work. That's why your lesson plans must be geared toward meeting students' need to acquire the self-discipline necessary to complete assignments and achieve goals. In many ways, the degree to which this objective is met determines whether or not students will be achievers—after graduation as well as while they are in school.

Finally, if you intend to meet the other four objectives, you cannot let your teaching plan become a rule rather than a tool. You must allow in your lesson plan the *flexibility to compensate for individual student needs, interests, abilities, and differences*. If you think all students can start at point A and arrive at point D just because this sequence is the structure of your course, class, or unit, you are mistaken. As professional educators, each of us must meet our students where they are academically and take them as far as they can go. That's what teaching is all about. Their starting points are our starting points.

You are the vital element in the learning process for all students

The classroom teacher is the vital element in the learning process. A healthy student-teacher relationship is one of partnership. That's why you must not minimize the importance of the first days of school. Your beginning approach and plan convey the tone and may even establish the climate in the classroom for the entire year.

Never forget, fundamental educational objectives and philosophies don't vary with grade or age. Only the content of academic material and the level of sophistication progress with grade and age. Your lesson plans must be focused on the individual student. You do not teach a class. You teach students in a class. The student rather than the subject matter is the first

consideration. Realizing this truth will keep your professional perspective intact and allow you to approach your responsibilities from a student-centered viewpoint.

If you give all students the opportunity to meet their needs through these five objectives, you will have given them an educational experience that will provide them with a lifetime of benefits.

The Master Teacher realizes the challenge and the expertise of teaching are to make the journey of learning as exciting and rewarding as the satisfaction of reaching the destination. You can never forget this truth if you want to be successful in the classroom.