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An ASCD Study Guide for

Awakening Genius in the Classroom

This Study Guide is designed to enhance your understanding of *Awakening Genius in the Classroom*, an ASCD book published in July 1998, by helping you make connections between the text and the classroom, school, or district in which you work. Written by Thomas Armstrong, this book inspires teachers to find the genius in each of their students.

You can use this Study Guide before or after you have read the book, or as you finish each chapter. If you have not read the book already, you may wish to scan this guide very quickly and highlight questions and instructions that are designed to prompt your thinking prior to your reading the text material carefully. The study questions provided are not meant to cover all aspects of the book but, rather, to address selected ideas we thought might warrant further reflection.

Most of the questions in this Study Guide are ones you can think about on your own. But you might also consider pairing with another colleague or a group of people who have read (or are reading) *The Multiple Intelligences of Reading and Writing*.

Preface

- 1- Do a current review of the literature in an educational database like ERIC, typing in the search words “love of learning” or the equivalent.
- 2- What connotations do the word “genius” bring up for you from your past?
- 3- Look up the word “genius” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and examine how its meaning has changed over the course of the history of the English language.
- 4- If the term “multiple intelligences” were placed on a continuum from 1 to 10, where 1 = awakening the love of learning in students and 10 = helping students prepare for standardized tests and other curricular expectations, where would you place it, and why?
- 5- Think back to your original reasons for getting into education. Can you place yourself somewhere in the past at the moment when you decided to become an educator? What were the feelings, ideas, impulses, and associations that prompted you to help children learn? Put that experience somewhere on the above scale from 1 to 10, and discuss why you put it there.
- 6- Would it have made a difference to you if the title of this book had been “Awakening Creativity in the Classroom” If so, what would that difference have been for you?
- 7- Read philosopher Alfred North Whitehead’s essay “The Aims of Education” and discuss whether you

feel not enough attention, too much attention, or just the right amount of attention has been placed on the “romance” stage of learning in contemporary education.

Part 1: Every Child Is a Genius

The Twelve Qualities of Genius

- 1- List the 12 qualities of genius in order of the importance you feel they have in the education and development of the child. Compare your list with those of colleagues, and discuss any differences of opinion.
- 2- List 12 *additional* qualities of genius that you feel the child also expresses in his or her life. Discuss your choices. Is an additional list needed for adolescents?
- 3- Do a review of the literature on a database such as ERIC or PsychInfo for each of the 12 qualities of genius (as well as the additional qualities of genius that you came up with), and discover what recent research has been done regarding each one.
- 4- To what extent are each of the 12 qualities of genius in children regarded as *negative* qualities by teachers and parents? Discuss the extent to which *context* determines whether a quality will be perceived as positive or negative (e.g., playfulness during recess versus playfulness during a standardized test). If context is key in deciphering the value of each quality of genius, what sort of implications does this have for awakening genius in the classroom?
- 5- Relate the 12 qualities of genius to Howard Gardner’s 8 intelligences. Do you see particular associations between specific qualities and single intelligences or groups of intelligences?
- 6- Look up the etymology of each of the 12 qualities of genius in the *Oxford English Dictionary* with the goal of getting at the deeper meanings of each word. Then relate these deeper meanings to the life of the child.
- 7- Do you think these 12 qualities of genius are universal in children? How do different cultural influences mediate their expression (or their failure to be expressed)?
- 8- Make a random list with the 12 qualities of genius intermixed with the following 12 traits: responsibility, discipline, accountability, standards, character, morality, sociability, perseverance, courage, ambition, motivation, and stability. Then have a group of colleagues rank the list of important qualities that a child needs to be successful in life. Which group of words tends to appear more often in the top 12? Discuss the results.

Theoretical Foundations

- 1- Research what is known about the neurological basis for some of the 12 qualities of genius (e.g., are there areas of the brain that are responsible for humor? Imagination? Joy?).
- 2- Read Marion Diamond's book *Magic Trees of the Mind* and discuss the role of the environment in pruning synaptic connections in the brain. If the environment is key in shaping the kind of brain that a child grows up with, what are the implications of this for theories of intelligence and learning that emphasize genetics and determinism in education (e.g., nature over nurture)?
- 3- If a child does not grow up around creative or imaginative adults, do you think that there are areas of the brain and/or networks of synapses that are literally starved to death due to this neglect? Why or why not?
- 4- Read Ashley Montagu's book *Growing Young* and discuss the concept of neoteny with respect to the 12 qualities of genius. Which of the 12 qualities are particularly important with respect to the survival of Homo sapiens (e.g., which qualities do we particularly need to preserve from childhood into adulthood in order to continue evolving as a species)?
- 5- Discuss the concept of neoteny in relation to the idea of immaturity. Is it possible for a child to be both immature and neotenous with respect to a given quality of genius (e.g., having the playfulness of the future artist or scientist, but at the same time playing in a way that is developmentally behind the behavior of peers)? If this is true, what implications does this have for our understanding of the concept of "immaturity" with respect to a child's development?
- 6- Collect statements from great individuals who have compared in some way the creative work they do with the work of children (include commentaries of people writing about these great figures).
- 7- Even though Picasso himself made the comparison, do *you* think it is fair to compare the artwork of children with a great work by Picasso? Isn't there a world of difference between the innocent naïve eye of the child and the practiced naïve sophistication of the great master? Or are there some important commonalities?
- 8- Do a review of the literature on the research related to Csikszentmihalyi's concept of "flow" and its application to children (in particular, children learning in educational settings).
- 9- Document "flow" events or other peak experiences in learning in the lives of the students you work with (e.g., keep a diary, create flow records, or create "peak learning" portfolios for specific students).

Part 2: The Genius Shuts Down

The Role of the Home

- 1- In your own school or school district, which of the four familial patterns seem to be most predominant among your students (dysfunctional, disadvantaged, fast-track, or rigid ideology)? What implications does this have for providing appropriate educational programming?
- 2- What positive measures have already been taken by your school or school district to ameliorate some of the negative influences of home life on the genius of students?
- 3- How does one confront the attitude among teachers that “There’s not a lot I can do to help this particular kid. He’s already been ruined by his home environment.” How is it possible to dialogue about the home patterns that shut down a child’s genius without falling into a blame-the-parent syndrome?
- 4- Select one of the four familial patterns and do some action research with regard to it (for example, survey students on the extent to which they feel “hurried child syndrome” or sample attitudes of students on the topic of prejudice before and after the initiation of a prejudice-awareness curriculum project).

The Role of the School

- 1- Think of times when you, as a teacher, chose *not* to explore topics of great interest with your students because you felt pressure to press on with the curriculum due to concerns with accountability, standards, and standardized tests? What thoughts do you have about this as you reflect on these specific instances?
- 2- What percentage of students in your school or school district have been labeled or tracked on the basis of their abilities? Has this number increased or decreased over the past five years? Look at the students who have been given a deficit label or placed in a lower track and assess the extent to which they have one or more of the 12 qualities of genius discussed in this book.
- 3- Determine a rough percentage of the learning that takes place in your classroom, school, or school district that is based upon textbooks, workbooks, lecture, and worksheets. Has this increased or decreased in the past five years? What measures can you take to decrease this percentage (or do you even believe it is *desirable* to decrease this percentage?)
- 4- Develop an action research project that uses Csikszentmihalyi’s Experience Sampling Method with students (where you ask students to write down what’s going on in their minds randomly throughout the school day). One suggestion: have students fill out a form where they rate on a scale of 1 to 10 the enthusiasm they are feeling for the lesson plan at that moment by placing a line on a bar and then anonymously handing in the form. Discuss the implications of the results with colleagues.

The Role of the Popular Media

- 1- Talk with students about how their own attitudes, values, and ideas have been shaped by the media around them.
- 2- Initiate a media awareness program at school which explores the various techniques used by different media to manipulate students' awareness, attitudes, feelings, and ideas to buy products, view certain programs, or think in certain ways about life.
- 3- Compare the writings and drawings of students in today's world with those of twenty-five years ago (if possible, compare current student work with archives of students' work from other decades at the same school). To what extent do you believe there has or has not been an erosion over that period of time in the students' abilities to create their own unique metaphors and images versus using those of the media?

Part 3: How to Awaken Genius in the Classroom

- 1- Sample the conversation in the teacher's lounge over a period of a week and determine what percentage of the conversation involves genuine excitement about the learning/teaching process, excitement about the content of the curriculum, or other displays of passion for learning about the world. Discuss the results with colleagues.
- 2- Create a "Teacher as Passionate Learner" program in your school where teachers get together to discuss things they are excited about learning (reading, travels, hobbies, etc.). See list on pp. 53-55 for resources and activities that could provide a basis for new, passionate learning.
- 3- Have teachers gather regularly to share "genial" or "genius awakening" experiences they are using in the classroom. See pp. 56-65 for sample descriptions of the kinds of experiences and climates that might be initiated in the classroom.
- 4- Initiate a project in your classroom, school, or school district that attempts to identify and describe *all* of the strengths, talents, aptitudes, competencies, intelligences, and other positive attributes of *all* the students.

Awakening Genius in the Classroom was written by Thomas Armstrong. This 81-page, 6" x 9" book (ISBN 0-87120-302-2) is available from ASCD for \$8.95 (ASCD member) and \$10.95 (nonmember). Copyright 1998 by Thomas Armstrong. To order a copy, call ASCD at 1-800-933-2723 (in Virginia 1-703-578-9600) and press 2 for the Service Center. Or buy the book from ASCD's Online Store.

An ASCD Study Guide for

Building Leadership Capacity in Schools

This ASCD Study Guide is designed to enhance your understanding of *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools* by helping you make connections between the text and the school or school district in which you work.

The Study Guide can be used after you have read the entire book or as you finish each chapter. The study questions provided are not meant to cover all aspects of the book; rather, they are intended to address selected ideas we thought might warrant further reflection.

Most of the questions contained in this Study Guide are ones you can think about on your own. But you might also consider pairing with another colleague or forming a group of people who have read (or are reading) *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools*. In addition to the study questions, this guide contains several activities under the heading "Extending Your Learning." We encourage you to try some of these activities, individually or with others; you might also consider modifying them for use in any professional development you might be involved in on the topic of building leadership capacity.

Chapter 1: What Is Leadership Capacity?

Questions to Reflect On

- 1- Can you think of a time when a key person—perhaps the principal or a key teacher leader—left the school in which you were working and the reform efforts fell apart? Describe what happened.
- 2- What does the author mean by "leadership capacity"?
- 3- What is the relationship between the breadth of participation and the skillfulness of that participation?
- 4- How does the author define "leadership"? How does this definition differ from your own definition? What are the implications of such a definition?
- 5- Do you agree that traditional definitions of leadership have kept us from achieving broad-based participation? How?
- 6- The "reciprocal learning processes" of constructivist leadership can also be viewed as constructivist adult learning and a cycle of inquiry. Are any of these processes in place in your school or organization? Give an example. If not, what strategies could be used to introduce them?
- 7- The author provides five key assumptions underlying leadership. Critique these assumptions. Are there any assumptions that you would add, change, leave out?

Chapter 2: Connecting Capacity Building with Leadership

Questions to Reflect On

- 1- When you have previously used the term "capacity building," what did that mean? How does the concept change when you add the word "leadership"?
- 2- The author describes leadership capacity as broad-based, skillful participation in the work of leadership. The matrix in Figure 2.1 suggests four school profiles based upon the relationship between these two dimensions. Do these descriptions make sense to you? Can you find your school in one of the quadrants or in a blend of quadrants?
- 3- Each of the quadrants addresses five key factors of leadership capacity. How do these factors interact to create the culture of a school?
- 4- How does the role of the principal differ from the traditional model if one of the goals of school improvement is to build leadership capacity? Give examples.
- 5- If you are a principal, how would you assess your own behaviors in this regard? If you are not a principal, how would you assess principals that you've known and worked with?

Chapter 3: Arabesque Elementary School

Questions to Reflect On

- 1- This chapter is the story of a school with low leadership capacity. Have you ever had experience with such a school? What was that like? What role did you play?
- 2- Teachers at Arabesque assumed little responsibility for the learning of children or the improvement of the school. Describe three indicators from the story that made this condition apparent.
- 3- What qualities did the new principal bring to Arabesque? Why were those qualities well suited for this culture?
- 4- The author suggests that limited reflective attitudes and practices can be a serious deterrent to both human and school development. What strategies have you found successful in building reflective practice in your school? What other ideas might you test?
- 5- The author claims that the educators, students, and parents of Arabesque are "no different from those found in many places." How can a school culture be so powerful as to bend and shape human behaviors in negative, nonproductive ways?
- 6- If a culture can do the opposite—that is, shape human behaviors in extraordinary, productive ways—what might you do immediately to intervene in your own school culture?
- 7- In the discussion of Arabesque, several actions were described. How else might you have handled this situation?

Chapter 4: Belvedere Middle School

Questions to Reflect On

- 1- This chapter is the story of a school with moderate leadership capacity. Have you ever worked in such a school? What happened? What role did you play?
- 2- "Pockets of resistance" frequently accompany change efforts. How might they have been prevented in the first place? Once they have solidified, how can they be addressed?
- 3- Marie appeared to be an effective principal, yet there were some school culture areas that she neglected or failed to perceive as important. What were they? What might she have done differently?
- 4- What mechanisms or strategies might the school have set in place during the spring and summer after Maria left so that the transition might have been more smooth?
- 5- Why is leadership capacity building a more comprehensive and essential approach to long-range improvement than a more narrow focus on curriculum, staff development, or discipline? If you disagree with this thesis, explain why.
- 6- Reflect upon the five key features of leadership capacity addressed in the discussion of Belvedere. Which one or ones do you consider most critical to the conditions described? Why?
- 7- John and the teacher leaders undertook several strategies in the fall of 1997. What strategies would you add? Modify? Leave out? If you could choose only two strategies, which do you consider the most powerful?

Chapter 5: Capricorn High School

Questions to Reflect On

- 1- High schools are considered among the most difficult of organizations to change (second only to the central office!). Why is that?
- 2- Describe the role of the principal at Capricorn. Would you consider him a "strong" principal? Why or why not? Has the principal relinquished more authority and responsibility than you would be comfortable with?
- 3- The author reveals the essence of leadership capacity at Capricorn through faculty dialogue. Why would she have made this choice? What is it about the interactions of people that tells us about leadership and about capacity?
- 4- Inquiry was a habit of mind at Capricorn. What is your own experience with a culture of inquiry and its effect on the school? Why is inquiry such a compelling way of thinking about our work? What effect does it have on our thinking processes?

- 5- Observers of high school reform argue that the difficult part of such reform is moving a faculty to the place of mutual respect, participation, and inquiry that Capricorn finds itself in. How do the five key features of leadership capacity building interact to bring about such conditions in the culture?
- 6- The author suggests that high school reform must be first and foremost cultural reform--an alteration in the beliefs and assumptions of the faculty and community about the school and their own roles in the school. Critique this statement. What critical factors in school reform does it fail to address?
- 7- The author would argue that once a staff and community learn to solve problems together, any problem is solvable. Do you agree?

Chapter 6: Essential Actions for Building Leadership Capacity in Your School and District

Questions to Reflect On

- 1- The author suggests that districts need to hire educators with a readiness for leadership work and work to develop them. What are your district and school doing to select and develop educators for leadership?
- 2- "Getting to know one another" is a simple, yet powerful, preparation for building trusting relationships. What kind of commitment have you made personally to this endeavor? Have you discovered some successful strategies?
- 3- Complete the staff and school Leadership Capacity Surveys (Appendixes A and B). How would you describe your present skills and conditions regarding leadership capacity? (Note: Individuals need to be familiar with the contents of Building Leadership Capacity in Schools before completing the surveys.)
- 4- What are some patterns or trends from the surveys that suggest further action? Describe two or three next steps. How will you know you're making progress?
- 5- Study the Rubric of Emerging Teacher Leadership (Appendix C) individually or in small groups in a faculty meeting. Ask each teacher to identify two areas from this rubric and two areas from the Leadership Capacity Survey as potential professional growth goals.
- 6- Is inquiry a habit of mind in your school? If so, describe how it works. If not, what compelling question might be used to launch an inquiry of data collection and analysis?
- 7- How are decisions made in your school and district? Are there opportunities for participation that provide most educators, most students, and many parents a means to be significantly involved in the work of the school?
- 8- The author suggests that districts need to provide for "high engagement and low bureaucratization." What does—or might—that look like in your district? What obstacles are in the way?

Chapter 7: Questions and a Few Answers

This chapter suggests several additional questions that may be used for reflection on your own practice. Even though the author provides a short answer for each, these answers are necessarily generic and will need to be made specific for your own setting. As you read these questions, consider the following:

- 1- Is this the way I would answer this question? How would I modify, change, or add to the response?
- 2- What examples or strategies can I provide that will clarify how this issue is played out in my own school and district?
- 3- What plans might be made to carry out this idea?
- 4- What other questions and answers might I add to the chapter? Consider sending them to the author, Linda Lambert, at the Department of Educational Leadership, California State University, Hayward, CA 94542-3080; e-mail: Linlambert@aol.com.

Extending Your Learning

- 1- With two other colleagues, recall three schools in which you've worked. If possible, include schools other than the ones in which you are now working. Using Figure 2.1, the Leadership Capacity Matrix, discuss and analyze each school. Can you locate each school in the matrix? Did each school improve? If so, what approaches or strategies accounted for the improvements? If not, what were the significant obstacles?
- 2- Now consider your current school. Can you locate it in the matrix, or in some blend of the matrix features? Plan three steps for building leadership capacity in your school.
- 3- Working with your school leadership team or professional development committee, design a faculty meeting that will describe and teach the concept of leadership capacity. What activities, strategies, and materials would you use? Include at least one of the leadership capacity surveys. How would you evaluate your effectiveness?
- 4- From a district perspective, design a workshop using the three cases from Chapters 3, 4, and 5 as a means of teaching the concept of leadership capacity building. What activities, strategies, and materials would you use? Ask participants to make recommendations for improving district support for building leadership capacity in schools.
- 5- Design an approach for your schools for extending participation to many who are not directly involved in decision making.
- 6- Design an additional approach to provide leadership skill development to the entire staff.
- 7- Hold an exploratory meeting with a local university. Discover how your school can provide regular feedback to the university about the effectiveness of their preparation programs.

- 8- Working with a group of colleagues, discuss how roles are currently prescribed in your school. How might they be reframed to alter roles and responsibilities with regard to colleagues, administrators, community, parents, and students? Write a letter to the staff outlining your conversation. Ask for feedback.
- 9- Write a letter to the author, giving your reactions to her book. If your perspective on the topics is quite different, consider using a "point-counterpoint" format.

Building Leadership Capacity in Schools is by Linda Lambert. This 136-page, 6" x 9" book (Product No. 198058) is available from ASCD for \$10.95 (ASCD member) and \$13.95 (nonmember). Copyright 1998 by ASCD. To order a copy, call ASCD at 1-800-933-2723 (in Virginia 1-703-578-9600) and press 2 for the Service Center. Or buy the book from ASCD's Online Store.

An ASCD Study Guide for

The Art of School Leadership

This ASCD Study Guide is designed to enhance your understanding of *The Art of School Leadership*, an ASCD book written by Thomas R. Hoerr and published in December 2005. It will help you make connections between the text and your personal and professional experiences. The author, a veteran school leader, offers invaluable advice on running a school, including how to promote collegiality, set goals, evaluate teachers, work with parents, manage meetings, support diversity, and make a difference in children's lives.

You can use the study guide after you have read the entire book or as you finish each chapter. The questions provided are not meant to cover all aspects of the book; rather, they address selected ideas that might warrant further reflection. Most of the questions are ones you can think about on your own, but you might consider pairing with a colleague or forming a group of people who have read (or are reading) *The Art of School Leadership*.

If you have any questions or comments about this study guide or about the book, you may contact the author at trhoerr@newcityschool.org.

Chapter 1: Leading a School

- 1- Can you envision a high-quality school in which the leader didn't believe that "leadership is about relationships"? How would this school differ from those described by Hoerr?
- 2- Hoerr explains how his interactions with Warren, a parent at his school, evolved from being adversarial to supportive. Have you ever experienced a similar situation? If so, what did you learn from the experience?
- 3- Some of the difficulties of collaboration stem from unclear roles and responsibilities. Have you had collaboration problems in your school setting? How could such problems be avoided?
- 4- The "excellence versus perfection" challenge is not, of course, about lunchroom trays. On what professional and personal issues do you struggle with the excellence versus perfection tension?
- 5- What could be done in schools of education and principal preparation programs to help future leaders become more adept at leading through relationships? Or are relationship skills something that people are born with?

Chapter 2: Promoting Collegiality

- 1- It is possible to have congeniality without collegiality, but can you have collegiality without congeniality? If so, how?
- 2- Barth's original components of collegiality did not include Hoerr's fifth component, teachers and administrators learning together. Is it realistic to expect teachers and administrators to learn together in your setting? What would make it more likely for this to happen?
- 3- On pp. 21-30, Hoerr offers practical ways to attain collegiality. Are any of these activities occurring in your setting? Which activity would be the easiest for you to implement? Which would be the most difficult?
- 4- Hoerr discusses the New City School teaching application form, which appears on pp. 195-196. What would you put in the small box if you were applying for a job?
- 5- Review the questions on pp. 33-34 about school culture, in particular "What are the characteristics of students who succeed?" and "What are the characteristics of teachers who succeed?" How would you respond to these questions as they relate to your school? Would most of the people at your school agree with your answers?

Chapter 3: Exploring the History of Supervision

- 1- Hoerr reviews the assumptions of hierarchy—work is predictable and constant, supervisors have more knowledge than their employees, and supervisors have the right to direct their employees—and how these assumptions have changed in the past 25 years. Have these assumptions changed more or less in schools than they have in businesses? Why?
- 2- What effect has the increase in worldwide commerce and competition had on supervision?
- 3- Is it accurate that secondary schools are far more likely to be "curriculum-centered" than "child-centered"? If so, what could be done to change this? Should this change take place?
- 4- Has e-mail changed the relationships between and among employees and supervisors in your work setting? If so, how? Is this a positive or a negative?
- 5- On which issues, if any, must principals be more knowledgeable and skilled than teachers?

Chapter 4: Setting Goals

- 1- Hoerr writes that "goals that are not shared with others are just hopes" (p. 51). Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- 2- What is something that is not now being measured at your school because it is difficult to quantify? If measurement occurred in this area, how might people behave differently?

- 3- Should supervisors share some, all, or none of their goals with their employees? Why?
- 4- How would faculty members in your setting respond to the personal/professional goal-setting process that Hoerr describes?
- 5- What gains could result from teachers generating team goals with colleagues from other grades or academic departments?

Chapter 5: Wielding Power

- 1- Do the forms of power used by elected politicians tend to vary based on whether they are serving at the local, state, or federal level? If so, why do you think this is the case?
- 2- What forms of power are considered the most important when administrators are hired? Are these forms of power different than the ones that enable administrators to be successful?
- 3- How will the kinds of power that an administrator uses change over time?
- 4- Is your power different in your personal and professional relationships? Explain.
- 5- How can you develop your expert power? How will others know that you have it?

Chapter 6: Evaluating Teacher Growth

- 1- Should principals formally observe all the teachers in their building? Is it realistic to expect principals to do so?
- 2- What should be done to support the growth of new teachers? Does this change if the new teacher has a decade or more of experience working in a noneducational setting?
- 3- To what degree does the evaluation process support the growth of teachers in your setting?
- 4- Would a performance pay system benefit students? Why or why not?
- 5- How could advances in technology be used to support teacher growth?

Chapter 7: Facilitating Creativity and Teamwork

- 1- Are there employees in your setting who might feel that they receive less respect? Are these feelings justified?
- 2- What would happen if everyone in your school called everyone else by first name only?
- 3- What strategies can principals use to build teams at their schools?
- 4- What is the best way for principals to elicit teacher feedback on their performance?
- 5- In describing creative teachers, Hoerr writes, "These kinds of teachers often aren't the easiest people to supervise, and they sometimes have difficulty working as teammates" (p. 118). Do you agree with the author? Why or why not?

Chapter 8: Making Meetings Meaningful.

- 1- When was the last time you heard someone say, "That was a great meeting"? What happened that caused the person to feel this way?
- 2- Does your school have too many or too few faculty meetings? Are these meetings meaningful?
- 3- How would the quality of meetings in your setting change if anyone could place items on the agenda?
- 4- Is it realistic to use the "Blackjack formula" (see pp. 123-124)? Why or why not?
- 5- To what degree are faculty committees integral to your school's success? On what topics should faculty committees be focused?

Chapter 9: Celebrating Our Differences

- 1- How will society's increasing racial and ethnic diversity change your workplace?
- 2- Do you agree with Hoerr's statement that "not only what we teach but also how we teach has implications for diversity" (p. 145)? What examples support your view?
- 3- Has your school addressed the diversities found within the staff? If so, was this successful? Would everyone agree with your answer? If this has not been done or has not been successful, what could be done?
- 4- How might the presence of a Diversity Coordinator help a principal? How might it hamper the principal?
- 5- Is it possible to teach a history or social studies curriculum that does not contain a diversity message? Are there times when it might be desirable to do so? If so, when?

Chapter 10: Partnering with Parents

- 1- What strategies can principals employ to help all families feel comfortable in the school? Would these strategies vary based on the socioeconomic level of students' parents?
- 2- How should schools make it easier for parents to give feedback to a school leader?
- 3- How can parents become involved in establishing school policies and setting school procedures? Should they be doing this?
- 4- Would intake conferences be successful in your school? If not, why?
- 5- What are the advantages and disadvantages of offering teachers' and administrators' home phone numbers to parents?

Chapter 11: Leading in the Year 2025

- 1- Hoerr cites ever-expanding technology, changing family life, and increased school accountability and competition as three factors that will affect schools in the future. Do you agree with these thrusts? What important factors did he not discuss?
- 2- Have you seen technology misused in schools? How could this be avoided?
- 3- Looking ahead, do you agree that schools will provide student supervision for more hours, days, and weeks? Is there any alternative? How is this trend a positive or a negative?
- 4- How can schools benefit from competition and parental choice? How might this be harmful?
- 5- What would it be like to work in a school that was led by someone with a strong distributed intelligence?

The Art of School Leadership was written by Thomas R. Hoerr. This 216-page, 7" x 9" original paperback book (Stock #105037; ISBN-13 978-1-4166-0229-3; ISBN-10 1-4166-0229-1) is available from ASCD for \$21.95 (ASCD member) or \$27.95 (nonmember). Copyright © 2005 by ASCD. To order a copy, call ASCD at 1-800-933-2723 (in Virginia 1-703-578-9600) and press 2 for the Service Center, or buy the book from ASCD's Online Store.

An ASCD Study Guide for

Principals Who Learn: Asking the Right Questions, Seeking the Best Solutions

This study guide is designed to increase your understanding of *Principals Who Learn: Asking the Right Questions, Seeking the Best Solutions* by Barbara Kohm and Beverly Nance. The intent of the guide is to help you review the concepts and vocabulary that are introduced in the book. The questions should be discussed in small groups or used by individual teachers.

Preface

Discuss the civic and educational responsibilities that are placed on social studies teachers.

Chapter 1: The Noisy Minority: From Loud Voices to All Voices

- 1- In what ways do you listen directly to several people with a broad range of perspectives?
- 2- What assumptions do you make that influence your decisions?
- 3- What opportunities are available for all voices to be heard?
- 4- In what setting would the guidelines for dialogue be most effective?

Chapter 2: No More Good Guys and Bad Guys: From the Comfort of Agreement to the Wisdom of Diversity

- 1- Which persons are perceived as the “good guy” and “bad guys” in your organization?
- 2- What underlying mental models support the thinking of “good guys” and “bad guys”?
- 3- What tools or strategies can you use to change these mental models and resolve conflict?
- 4- Think about a situation in the past which had unintended consequences. What insights could have emerged if you and a team of school leaders had conducted an After Action Review?

Chapter 3: Missing Persons: From an Open Door to an Open School

- 1- Do you have an open-door policy? Is it helping or hindering your efforts to build your faculty into a strong team with the energy and know-how to move your school forward?
- 2- What structures and practices do you need to add to your open-door policy to make certain that you are hearing all voices?

- 3- Are all the people who have an interest in the problem together in the same room at the same time when decisions are made? If not, who's missing? How does the absence of these persons influence the effectiveness of your problem solving?
- 4- Do you begin problem-solving discussions with a brainstorming session to identify the positive qualities and conditions you have to work with? How does identifying positive outcomes first affect the tone of the conversation and the quality of decisions you make?
- 5- Are you working actively to build a culture of openness and transparency? What cultural norms and organizational structures support this effort?
- 6- How do you know if a culture of “insiders” and “outsiders” is developing in your school?
- 7- If you find “in-groups” and “out-groups” developing in your school, what can you do to move your staff toward a more inclusive culture?

Chapter 4: To Change or Not to Change: From Avoiding to Embracing Risk

- 1- All options have benefits and risks, yet we often view one option as having only benefits and another as having only risks. How do you work with teachers and parents to examine both the benefits and risks of every option?
- 2- What strategies do you and your faculty use to assess the risks of various options?
- 3- Do you look for opportunities in seemingly risky situations and do you encourage your faculty to do the same?
- 4- How do you help your staff tolerate the ambiguity that comes with innovation and new learning?
- 5- What risks have you been willing to take in pursuit of your goals? Did you have a clear understanding of the risks you were taking when you made a particular decision? If so, how did you know? If not, how might you have learned more about the risks involved before you made the decision?
- 6- Use the question, “Who Pays?” to assess important decisions you've made and the risks you've taken in the past year.

Chapter 5: Lemonade Opportunities: From Mistakes to Possibilities

- 1- How do you work with your staff to help them see possibilities in difficult situations?
- 2- Are your staff members focused on proving themselves or improving their work?
- 3- How can you help teachers and students in your school see mistakes as opportunities to learn rather than character flaws to be corrected or punished?
- 4- How are teachers in your school encouraged to make their work public and learn from one another?

- 5- How might the ideas of “mistakes as learning opportunities” and “problems as possibilities” be built into the everyday structures of your school?

Chapter 6: Keeping the Rubber Band Taut: From Seeking Calm to Valuing Tension

- 1- How do you determine “current reality” when addressing an issue? What questions do you ask? What data do you collect?
- 2- What structures and forums are available to allow everyone to provide input and share perspectives?
- 3- How do you determine whether you should “keep the rubber band taut” and continue the change process you have started, or accept that it is not working and it's time to return to the drawing board?

Chapter 7: What Do We Know? From Expert to Learner

- 1- What is your decision-making process? What factors determine when and if you will seek outside input before making a decision?
- 2- When faced with a problem that has ramifications for the entire staff, how might you involve your staff in finding a solution?
- 3- What underlying assumptions might you have about the value of staff input?

Chapter 8: Little Things Mean A Lot: From Isolated Details to Connected Leverage Points

- 1- What are the known traditions in your school? What is their purpose and who is affected by them? What is their value to the whole organization? What would be the impact of changing them?
- 2- Have you made a change to a policy or tradition that was unpopular with teachers, students, parents, or the community? How did you handle the change process and how might you do it differently next time?
- 3- What are some ways to raise awareness of isolated traditions and help people see them as part of a larger system?
- 4- Think of a problem or event that has not been resolved by the efforts or solutions used to improve it. Gather a group of people with a variety of perspectives and use the Iceberg model to analyze the patterns, structures, and mental models that have led to its creation. What have you learned?

Chapter 9: What Counts: From Intentions to Results

- 1- Do you take the time to surface the mental models that underlie your own and other people's actions?
- 2- Do you listen nonjudgmentally, particularly to those with whom you disagree?
- 3- Do you acknowledge your own and other people's intentions but judge success by results?

- 4- Are your results focused on student learning?
- 5- What results have you and your faculty decided to work toward? How do you measure your progress? How are these results disseminated? How are assessments of progress used to help teachers and students move forward?
- 6- Are you working to develop a school culture that focuses on learning and continual improvement, not perfection? How are you using established structures and systems to develop this culture? What new structures or systems have you developed or might you develop to achieve this goal?
- 7- Do you provide the opportunities, expectations, and structure teachers need to share their classroom instruction and learn from one another?

Chapter 10: Developing a Collaborative Culture: From Command and Control to Collaborative Responsibility

- 1- How have you worked with your faculty to purposefully design systems for information flow, problem solving, resources allocation, and goal setting?
- 2- How do you and your faculty focus the resources for time, money, space, and personnel on improving student learning?
- 3- How do you use your school goals to drive school reform efforts?
- 4- What organizational structures have you developed to capitalize on teacher knowledge, optimism, and energy?
- 5- Collaborative cultures are guided by three important beliefs. These include the following:
 - a- Create transparency by doing as little as possible behind closed doors
 - b- Allow people affected by a decision to have a voice in the decision-making process
 - c- Make improving student learning the desired outcome for all decisions
- 6- How are these beliefs reflected in the cultural norms and organizational structures in your school?

Chapter 11: Redesigning Meetings: From Administrative Details to Engines of Reform

- 1- How are your staff meetings structured?
 - a- Who plans the agendas?
 - b- How much time is spent on dialogue and discussion?
 - c- How much time is spent on announcements and presentations?
 - d- How often is dialogue and discussion focused on student learning?
 - e- How much meeting time is spent planning school events and dealing with discipline issues?

- 2- Is your current meeting structure helping teachers build their capacity to learn and teach?
- 3- Are agendas carefully constructed to make certain everyone has a voice in deliberations?
- 4- How are decisions made? Is it clear up-front who will make a particular decision and who will serve in an advisory capacity?
- 5- How are conflicts handled? Are they avoided? Are different opinions seen as personal affronts or are they used to deepen everyone's understanding of an issue? What strategies do you use to move a conversation from a personal attack to a complete understanding of all sides of an issue?

Chapter 12: A Shift in Thinking: From Looking at the Parts to Seeing the Whole

- 1- In your school, what is the mental model for successful students? When students graduate or are promoted to the next school level, what do they look like, sound like, and behave like?
- 2- What opportunities are available to listen to all perspectives, see new possibilities, ask good questions, and create the results that you and your staff want?
- 3- What is your current hiring process for new teachers? Who has input into that decision?
- 4- In what ways are teachers given opportunities to grow and contribute as leaders in your building?

Afterward: A New Reality

- 1- What assumptions guide your leadership practices? What past or current experiences have influenced you to shift your thinking?
- 2- Are your current practices helping you to become the type of leader you want to be? As lead learner, are you fulfilling your individual purpose?
- 3- What opportunities are available for you to talk with each staff member about his or her personal talents, professional purpose, and how to fulfill that purpose?
- 4- What is your school's shared vision? Do you consistently reference your school's goals and model your organizational norms? Do you hold the same expectations for your staff?
- 5- When and how do you help teachers examine their mental models about teaching and learning and their commitment to the organizational norms?
- 6- When and how does your school community, including teachers, parents, and students, engage in team learning by using dialogue and discussion?
- 7- In what ways does your system demonstrate interdependence?
- 8- In what ways do you and your staff consistently use your mission statement as a guidepost for teaching and learning?

- 9- What complexities in your organization make change difficult?
- 10- Instead of asking what's wrong and how to fix it, how can you encourage your staff to look at what might be possible and how to create it?

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Inspiring Active Learning: A Complete Handbook for Today's Teachers

by Merrill Harmin and Melanie Toth

Part I: Two Keys for Running an Inspiring Classroom

Chapter 1. Clarity About What Makes a Classroom Inspiring to Students

Chapter 2. A Four-Step Process to Make a Classroom More Inspiring

Part II: Strategies for Handling Six Fundamental Teaching Tasks

Chapter 3. Creating Lessons That Inspire Active Learning

Chapter 4. Establishing a Climate That Inspires Full Participation

Chapter 5. Establishing a Climate That Inspires High Cooperation

Chapter 6. Structuring Class Time Efficiently

Chapter 7. Using Small Groups Efficiently

Chapter 8. Preventing Discipline Problems from Arising

Part III: Strategies for Starting Classes Efficiently

Chapter 9. Gathering the Attention of Students

Chapter 10. Handling Completed Homework

Chapter 11. Providing for a Quick Review of Completed Content

Part IV: Strategies for Presenting New Content

Chapter 12. Motivating Interest in New Content

Chapter 13. Explaining and Lecturing Effectively

Chapter 14. Providing Discovery-Type Experiences

Part V: Strategies for Helping Students Master Content

Chapter 16. Helping Students Master Content in a Whole-Class Format

Chapter 17. Helping Students Master Content in Individual and Small-Group Formats

Chapter 18. Using Projects to Help Students Master Content

Chapter 19. Stimulating Higher-Level Thinking

Chapter 20. Responding to Student Comments and Using Praise Appropriately

Part VI: Strategies for Ending Classes Efficiently

Chapter 21. Helping Students Review and Summarize a Class

Chapter 22. Providing Effective Homework Assignments

Part VII: Strategies for Further Advancing Teacher Effectiveness

Chapter 23. Advancing Students' Learning Skills

Chapter 24. Making Learning More Real and Lasting for Students

Chapter 25. Inspiring Students to Strive for Excellence

Chapter 26. Advancing Students' Self-Responsibility

Chapter 27. Advancing Students' Self-Confidence

Chapter 28. Advancing Students' Maturity

Chapter 29. Advancing Our Own Personal Balance

Part VIII: Strategies for Evaluating Student Learning

Chapter 30. Handling Students' Written Work

Chapter 31. Handling Testing and Grading

Chapter 32. Reporting Students' Progress

Part IX: Strategies for Maintaining Discipline

Chapter 33. Handling Routine Misbehavior

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An ASCD Study Guide for

Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom

This ASCD Study Guide is designed to enhance your understanding and application of the information contained in *Checking for Understanding*, an ASCD book written by Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey and published in September 2007.

You can use the study guide before or after you have read the book, or as you finish each chapter. The study questions provided are not meant to cover all aspects of the book, but, rather, to address specific ideas that might warrant further reflection.

Most of the questions contained in this study guide are ones you can think about on your own, but you might consider pairing with a colleague or forming a study group with others who have read (or are reading) *Checking for Understanding*.

Chapter 1: Why Check for Understanding?

- 1- What are common ways that teachers check for understanding? Identify some approaches that are effective and some that are not effective. What differentiates an approach as effective or not?
- 2- Discuss the differences between formative and summative assessments. When is each appropriate for use in the classroom?
- 3- Discuss the relationship between checking for understanding and understanding by design. How do these two ideas compliment each other?
- 4- Discuss the relationship between checking for understanding and differentiating instruction. How do these two ideas compliment each other?
- 5- Discuss the relationship between checking for understanding and the goals for closing the achievement gap. How do these two ideas compliment each other?
- 6- In their book *Breakthrough*, Fullan, Hill, and Crévola (2006) suggest that we need more precision teaching and less prescriptive teaching. What does this mean? Do you agree?

Chapter 2. Using Oral Language to Check for Understanding

- 1- What is oral language?
- 2- Why would an understanding of oral language development help teachers check for understanding?

- 3- Discuss the misuses of oral language in the classroom.
- 4- As you read the chapter, update the strategy grid (below) by adding a description of the strategy in your own words and ways in which you can use this strategy to check for understanding. Share your ideas with others who use the same strategy.
- 5- Observe your colleagues in the next faculty meeting. What nonverbal clues do they use to signal interest, questions, or confusion?
- 6- Ask one of your colleagues to retell this chapter to you and practice using the retelling rubric.
- 7- What are common student misconceptions in the subjects you teach? Where do these misconceptions come from and how should we address them? It is especially helpful to discuss these questions with people who teach courses similar to yours.
- 8- Consider the example of history teacher Ted Clausen. What type of environment needs to be created such that students can discuss incorrect responses and identify flaws in the answers?

Chapter 3: Using Questioning to Check for Understanding

- 1- Why has questioning been used to assess comprehension for so long?
- 2- What types of questions help students think and provide teachers with an opportunity to check for understanding?
- 3- Discuss the misuses of questioning in the classroom.
- 4- As you read the chapter, update the strategy grid (below) by adding a description of the strategy in your own words and ways in which you can use this strategy to check for understanding. Share your ideas with others who use the same strategy.
- 5- Consider the QUILT framework for questioning. With a peer, identify a set of questions you could ask for an upcoming unit of study.
- 6- Use the seven components of listening to assess the habits of your colleagues and/or your students as they talk with one another. What instruction might your students need to improve their listening? What might you do to improve yours?
- 7- Consider the interaction between Ms. Jacobsen and her students. What is unique about this interaction? How does she engage her students through questioning? What questions would you like to ask her?

Chapter 4: Using Writing to Check for Understanding

- 1- Recap your thinking thus far about the ways in which teachers can check for understanding. What happens as you write? Did you discover ideas that you didn't know you had? Did you clarify your thinking? Did you identify new questions?
- 2- Discuss why writing can be used as an assessment tool across the curriculum and not just in English / language arts classes.
- 3- Discuss the misuses of questioning in the classroom.
- 4- As you read the chapter, update the strategy grid (below) by adding a description of the strategy in your own words and ways in which you can use this strategy to check for understanding. Share your ideas with others who use the same strategy.
- 5- Collect some student writing samples and meet with a colleague to determine whether or not the students understand the content. How does their writing inform you about their thinking?
- 6- Discuss the difference between think-pair-share and read-write-pair-share. When would you use each? When is one more appropriate for checking for understanding?
- 7- Summarize, on one page or less, your thoughts about checking for understanding. What skills did you use to accomplish this task? Were you successful? If so, why? If not, why not? Consider the instructional implications of summary writing based on your experiences.
- 8- Write a series of RAFT prompts for your content area. Share them with colleagues and collect a variety of prompts you can use in your classroom.

Chapter 5: Using Projects and Performances to Check for Understanding

- 1- What are the differences between projects and performances. When could each be used in checking for understanding?
- 2- What projects or performances have you been involved with that were especially powerful for your own learning?
- 3- Discuss the misuses of projects and performances in the classroom.
- 4- As you read the chapter, update the strategy grid (below) by adding a description of the strategy in your own words and ways in which you can use this strategy to check for understanding. Share your ideas with others who use the same strategy.
- 5- Discuss the four design principles for projects and performances. What are examples of each that have been used in situations where you were the learner? Have you been involved with projects or performances in which these design principles were not all in place? What happened?

- 6- The students at Hoover High School produced videos as part of their learning project. How do you think that media and the Internet facilitate learning? What are the risks of using these types of tools?
- 7- Talk with your colleagues about a public performance that you could create, linked to specific content standards, that would allow students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning with a larger audience.

Chapter 6: Using Tests to Check for Understanding

- 1- Discuss a time when you had a formal test. How did you feel? What did you do to prepare for the exam? What types of knowledge were tapped on the test and what types of knowledge were not?
- 2- Discuss the history of testing in schooling. Describe the uses of tests for accountability versus instruction.
- 3- Discuss the misuses of tests in the classroom.
- 4- As you read the chapter, update the strategy grid (below) by adding a description of the strategy in your own words and ways in which you can use this strategy to check for understanding. Share your ideas with others who use the same strategy.
- 5- Select a content standard and develop at least two different types of test items (e.g., multiple choice, short answer, dichotomous choices, and essays). Discuss how the different items demonstrate student understanding and what each fails to show.
- 6- Search online or in a bookstore/library for sample test items. Analyze these items for their strengths and weaknesses. Use the checklist in figure 6.2 to determine if the item meets minimum standards.

Chapter 7: Using Common Assessments and Consensus Scoring to Check for Understanding

- 1- Discuss the importance of using data to improve student achievement. Note how assessments are useful in planning instruction.
- 2- Review the protocol for using common assessments and do an inventory of your school. Which of these components are in place, or could be easily put in place? Which will require professional development and/or administrative support?
- 3- As you read the chapter, update the strategy grid (below) by adding a description of the strategy in your own words and ways in which you can use this strategy to check for understanding. Share your ideas with others who use the same strategy.

Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment Techniques for Your Classroom was written by Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey. This 170-page, 8" x 10" book (Stock # 107023; ISBN-13: 978-1-4166-0569-0)