

Teaching Strategies Straight from the Heart



Andrew James Shaw, M.Ed.

OVERVIEW

Beginning with a discussion of his early influences related to teachers and teaching – including a look back at clips of classic television shows that focused on teachers and teaching – author Andrew James Shaw offers a vast array of practical, useful, and time-tested teaching strategies “straight from the heart,” which he has developed by drawing on a host of very diverse experiences over a 22-year career in teaching. This comprehensive eBook introduces the easy-to-follow ASSETSS (Andrew Shaw System for Excellence in Teaching and Student Success) Approach that can help both new and more veteran teachers to move from merely surviving to truly thriving in the “wonderful wilderness” of teaching.

The eBook outlines in detail many effective strategies for getting the semester started smoothly, by describing how to specifically handle the first day of the semester, as well as how to stay organized and keep students motivated throughout the semester through the use of different types of resources, such as those related to Reality TV shows. The eBook also includes a good number of hyperlinked websites and handout pages that teachers can use with their own classes, and also offers a view to the future by looking at features of 21st Century Learning, such as wireless learning and Web 2.0 tools. It concludes with some tips on how teachers can make sure they are working well, staying healthy, and being happy at school.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Throughout a 22-year career in Education, Andrew James Shaw has worked as a teacher, coach, Guidance Counsellor, and Curriculum Leader (Department Head) at several secondary schools in Metropolitan Toronto (Scarborough) and Lambton-Kent in Ontario, Canada. He is presently a teacher in the School Within a College Program at Lambton College in Sarnia, Ontario. As his [resume](#) shows, Andrew has focused on contributing to Professional Learning experiences for teachers and school staff. He is a member of the Ontario College of Teachers and holds a Master of Education degree from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of The University of Toronto. Andrew has served as a workshop presenter, an Associate Teacher, and a Teacher Mentor, and also has taught teachers in the Teacher of Adults Certificate Program at Lambton College and the On-Line Guidance and Career Education Additional Qualification Program of the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario.

Andrew's approach to Teacher Professional Learning is based on supporting teachers from the bottom up, with lots of pats on the back, as he promotes and shares teaching strategies "straight from the heart." In addition to his varied and extensive background in Education, he has attained a post-degree Certificate in Workplace Wellness and Health Promotion from Centennial College, as well as extensive community development experience through serving on several Boards of Directors, including Sarnia-Lambton REBOUND, the Sarnia Community Foundation, and the Ontario School Counsellors' Association. A portion of the proceeds from this eBook – which is dedicated to Andrew's wife Theresa and their two young children – will go toward supporting non-profit community organizations.

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PREFACE

One month ago today, I attended a Gala Graduation Banquet at Lambton College in Sarnia, Ontario, which celebrated the efforts of students in the School Within a College (SWAC@Lambton) Program. The hard work of 15 SWAC students was highlighted, and once their marks were finalized, 12 of these SWAC students had officially met all of the course requirements for graduation, and three others were in position to complete their final course over the summer in order start attending college in the fall. As the SWAC@Lambton Teacher, I had seen first-hand that these SWAC students had taken full advantage of this innovative program, which offers a combination of high school and college credits (Dual Credits) and is designed to assist early high school leavers in earning their Ontario Secondary School Diploma and moving on to college.

The highlight of the evening was a short speech given by Shantel Knight on behalf of the SWAC@Lambton Class of 2012. Shantel, the single mother of a young daughter, was one of several students in this year's SWAC Program who I had taught when they were in Grade 9. My role then was to help students make a successful transition from elementary to secondary school and now it is to help them move as smoothly as possible from secondary to post-secondary studies. Shantel, who completed her diploma requirements by gaining five high school credits and three Dual Credits while in the SWAC Program, was a bit reluctant when I asked her to say a few words at the Graduation Banquet, but agreed to nonetheless. Speaking through tears of joy and relief, Shantel thanked the SWAC and Dual Credit teachers and the Lambton College staff for their support in helping her to realize her goal of completing high school and

inspiring her to apply to and go on to college. When Shantel finished her speech, she received an emotional and well-deserved standing ovation.

When the standing ovation ended, it was my turn to address the graduates and their friends, relatives, and invited guests. I spoke about how proud I was of all the SWAC Graduates for hanging in there and achieving their goal of attaining a high school diploma. I also emphasized how Lambton College can help make life better for a person and their family – my Mom worked at Lambton College and Dad was a graduate, which helped him get a promotion at work and create a better life for our family, and now I am fortunate to be able to benefit from working there, too. I continued by stating my love for the learning environment at Lambton College and my hope that some of that love of learning had rubbed off on this year’s SWAC students like it rubbed off on me from my Grade 7 and 8 teacher Mr. Ian Cryer, who I had been seated next to and been catching up with throughout the Graduation Banquet. I thanked him for his ongoing support of the SWAC Program in his new role as a Board Trustee. That night, Mr. Cryer (also a former Federation President) told me that 38 of his former students are now teachers – and those are just the ones that he knows of – so his overall influence in education has been huge.



**Mr. Ian Cryer, my Grade 7 and 8 Teacher, Former Federation President,
and Current School Board Trustee for Lambton-Kent District School Board**

In the weeks following the SWAC Graduation Banquet, as I have been focusing on putting the finishing touches on this eBook about “teaching from the heart,” I have been thinking quite a bit about how big an influence Mr. Ian Cryer has had on me and my life as a teacher. Both my twin brother Al and our older sister Sally are included in those 38 former students that were no doubt inspired by Mr. Cryer to pursue the somewhat unpredictable, yet often rewarding career of teaching. Specifically, I have been reflecting on what it was about his approach to teaching that made Mr. Cryer – who was in his second and third year of teaching when he was my Grade 7 and 8 teacher – such an effective teacher and inspirational role model. Although I didn’t know how to explain it at the time (1977-1979), I have come to realize that although I had previously seen some inspiring television shows about teachers and teaching, Mr. Cryer was the first teacher I had had whose approach to teaching could best be described as “teaching from the heart.”

Simply put, the best way to summarize what I mean by “teaching from the heart” is to focus on student learning, making sure that the students feel that you care about them, and to concentrate on being a “good” teacher, while not worrying about being perceived as a “nice” teacher. Even though Mr. Cryer was just starting his teaching career, he definitely taught from the heart. He was not concerned if we protested about having to copy out a long History note from the blackboard, but would not hesitate to interrupt class to take us outside to play snow football. He also taught with an excellent sense of humour. We all knew that he cared – a lot – about us and our learning. His 38 now-teaching former students, and *our* students, have benefitted greatly from his legacy.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As we were growing up in the 1970s and '80s, my brother Al and I used to really like to watch television shows about teachers and teaching. The earliest one I remember us watching, probably in re-runs, was "[Room 222](#)." Watching the teachers on that show made me feel like teaching was an enjoyable and rewarding profession. I especially related to the Social Studies teacher, [Pete Dixon](#), who had an excellent rapport with his students. Even though he was black and I am white, I decided at the time that I wanted my hair to look like his when I grew up – and in the end, as a result of male pattern baldness, it did. Another show that we watched in re-runs was "[The Bill Cosby Show](#)." In the show, which had what we thought was the coolest opening theme song, Bill Cosby played a Physical Education teacher at a Los Angeles high school named Chet Kincaid, who was funny and always wanted his students to learn something, whether they wanted to or not. We already knew Bill Cosby from watching "[Fat Albert](#)" on Saturday morning cartoons, and we liked the way the characters on that show always tried to do the right thing and always tried to treat each other with respect, and how Bill Cosby always made sure that we viewers had understood his message and learned something in each episode.

Two of our favourite teacher shows from that era that we didn't have to watch in re-runs were "The White Shadow" and "Welcome Back Kotter." These shows both focused on big-hearted teachers working with sometimes difficult-to-deal-with students from a variety of socio-economic and racial backgrounds. As a result of teaching and coaching for 6½ years in Scarborough, Ontario (located in the eastern part of Metropolitan Toronto), I did eventually have a similar experience to Ken Reeves (played

by Ken Howard), the main character of "[The White Shadow](#)," who was a former NBA player who turned to coaching high school basketball in Los Angeles after a knee injury ended his playing career. One of the schools that I worked at in Scarborough was L'Amoreaux Collegiate, which at that time (1993-1995) was the most multi-cultural school in the world, with 89 different countries being represented by students and staff members. During the time I spent teaching and coaching there, it was not at all unusual for me to be the only white person in the room, and after a while I can honestly say that I got to the point where I no longer focused on the students' cultural background or skin culture and just worked with them on whatever it was we were involved with – English or Physical Education courses, Black History Month presentations, Calypso Band (I was the singer), or basketball, volleyball, or track and field.

It was during my time at L'Am that I came to realize the importance of building a really strong rapport with my students. Because I was just starting my teaching career then, I needed to be observed by the Principal as part of the formal evaluation process for new teachers. At the conclusion of the class that she observed, the Principal mentioned that she thought I could have done a better job at asking questions of the students during the class, and suggested that I look into reading up on Bloom's Taxonomy to learn more about effective questioning techniques. Having said that, she emphasized that although teachers can learn to ask more effective questions, one thing that they cannot really learn is how to have an excellent rapport with students, and that is one thing that she thought was obvious that I had with my students as she watched me interact with them. I believe that the connections that I was able to make with students through extra-curricular activities were vital in helping me to build strong rapport inside the classroom as well.

I really enjoyed the two years I spent at L'Am, and would have to say that they were probably the most rewarding years of my teaching career to date. Unfortunately, due to cutbacks within the School Board, I was declared surplus to the school staff at L'Am and was transferred to Osler High School, a Grade 7-12 all-Special Education High School in Scarborough, which proved to be a challenge that I was ill-prepared to take on at the time. The 2½ years I spent at Osler wound up being the low point of my teaching career, although I did do a lot of reflecting and soul-searching related to my teaching practice that I was able to put to good use as my teaching career progressed. Looking back now, it seems kind of funny that experiencing a teaching assignment that was a constant day-to-day struggle and caused me to seriously pursue another line of work is what actually helped me to become a much better teacher overall. Years later, in 2009, I even voluntarily took a transfer to a Special Education high school – something I swore I would never do after my experience at Osler. But more about that later.

After those 6½ years in Scarborough, I decided to accept a new teaching position and move back to my hometown of Sarnia, Ontario. It had been during my final year of high school at Northern Collegiate in Sarnia that I had first considered a career as a secondary school English teacher. That was the year that I had Mr. Don Phillips again as my English teacher. He was the English Department Head, and had also been my English teacher in Grade 10 and my basketball coach in Grade 11. He was definitely someone who taught and coached “from the heart,” and although he could be gruff at times, we all knew that he cared a lot about his students and athletes. I can remember being in class and watching Mr. Phillips intently – he was standing at the front of Room 345, emphasizing with great insight a specific point – and saying to myself how it would

be a good job to be a secondary school English teacher. And then 24 years later, during the 2007-2008 school year, I found myself back at the same school as the English Department Head, and even teaching in the same room. I had returned to Northern two years earlier and eventually wound up teaching in Mr. Phillips' old room, but instead of teaching students who were on their way to university, I was teaching the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course – the last chance for students who had failed the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test to meet the required literacy component needed to graduate – to 15 Grade 12 boys who, suffice it to say, were not fans of reading/writing.

And so it was that I found myself in a very similar situation to Mr. Gabe Kotter (played by Gabe Kaplan) in "[Welcome Back Kotter](#)" – back at his old high school and trying his best to figure out how to handle his class of "[Sweat Hogs](#)." As opposed to my earlier stint at Osler High School in Scarborough, this time I was much more prepared to handle this difficult group of students. This was because after leaving Osler, I was able to develop a comprehensive system for effective teaching practice, self-sufficiency, and personal well-being that I came to refer as the "Andrew Shaw System for Excellence in Teaching and Student Success" (ASSETSS). The ASSETSS Approach provides both beginning and experienced teachers with a practical and comprehensive plan for getting off to a strong start to the semester (beginning on the first day) as well as offering effective strategies for staying organized, keeping students motivated, working well, and being healthy and happy throughout the school year – in effect, how to move from merely surviving to actually thriving in the "wonderful wilderness" of teaching.

As mentioned, I started developing the ASSETSS Approach after leaving Osler and taking advantage of the opportunity to participate in some professional development

sessions on effective classroom management strategies. It definitely has served as a way to demonstrate to my students from the opening minutes of the first class of the semester that I have a concrete plan to deal with their behavior and ensure that I have a handle on motivating them and keeping them on the right track to improved student learning. Following the ASSETSS Approach has made teaching easier and more enjoyable for me, and I have been able to share this approach with the teachers I have worked with and have been pleased to see how it has been helpful for them as well. It also has helped me build my confidence to such a high level that I even accepted a transfer to a Special Education high school in Sarnia, which as I mentioned before, I had no intention of doing following my negative experience at Osler High School. Thanks to the ASSETSS Approach, this time around things went so much smoother and I was pleased to be able to derive a much greater sense of satisfaction out of working in an all-Special Education environment. The ASSETSS Approach helped me, and I believe it will help you as well.



Effective Teaching Strategies to Help You Move From Surviving to Thriving in the Wonderful Wilderness of Teaching

CHAPTER 2: GETTING STARTED

Before the first day, it just takes a little bit of organizing to set things up so that you can get off to a smooth start to the semester. It is important to keep the following in mind:

1. Teacher binder – class lists, attendance, mark sheets
2. Preparing Handouts – Course Outline, Student Info. Sheet, Discipline Referral Sheet
3. Books/Textbooks
4. Seating Plan/Attendance

1. Teacher Binder: Class Lists, Attendance, and Mark Sheets

Start with a 1½” binder and some dividers with different colour tabs. You will need at least four dividers for each of the classes you are teaching in a particular semester. The first divider (I use a red tab for this one) will demarcate your attendance sheets. You can print these off for each month of the semester from your MarkBook or other marks program. Use these sheets to mark students Absent or Late, to make notes as to the reason for Absence (illness, appointment, suspension, school activity, etc.), as well as to note any out-of-the-ordinary occurrences (Buses Cancelled due to bad weather, your attendance at Professional Development sessions, and so on).

The next divider section is for your marks to be entered. (I use blue for this one.) Using a grid of your Class List, you will record the title of the assignment, what the assignment is out of, date it was completed, and the students’ marks. You can print this grid from MarkBook, or perhaps from the Premier Agenda web site (more on this later).

2. Preparing Handouts: Course Outline, Student Information Sheet, and Discipline Referral Sheet

There are several handouts that you will need to prepare for the first day of the semester (you will need to ensure that you have enough – and some extra – for each student on your Class List): A) the Course Outline for each of your courses, B) Student Information Sheets, and C) Discipline Referral Sheets, which will be filled in by the students and collected by you on the first day of classes. You will then use the next two dividers to store the Student Information Sheets and the Discipline Referral Sheets.

3. Books/Textbooks

You will also need to find the appropriate textbook(s) for all of your courses before the first day, so that you can show them to the students during the first class. Again, ensure that you have enough for each of your students and some extra for students that have been added to the class at the last minute. It is also a good idea not to sign the textbooks out to the students (thereby allowing them to take the textbooks home) until the second week of classes to avoid losing track of some of the textbooks assigned to students who later make a course change and end up switching out of your class.

4. Seating Plan/Attendance

Using [MarkBook](#) or other marks program, you can create Seating Plan forms that are specific to your classroom space. You will be able to create a form that has the correct amount of rows and seats and then you just click and drag each student's name from your class list to their spot. In order to learn their names quickly, I suggest that you

consider seating the students alphabetically, which is especially helpful when you are new to a school, as well as when you have a supply teacher covering your classes.

CHAPTER 3: THE FIRST DAY

Over 22 years in teaching, I have come to believe that the most important key to a successful first day is to stay calm and demonstrate to the students that you have a system that you are going to follow – the ASSETSS Approach – and to deliver it to them in the following step-by-step manner. Follow these easy steps:

1. Greet students at the door as they come into the classroom

2. Take attendance, then put the students in alphabetical order (tell them this makes it easier for you to learn their names quickly and for Supply Teachers to take the attendance)

3. Distribute Handouts:
 - A) Distribute Course Outline and go over it with the students
 - B) Distribute Student Information Sheet
 - C) Distribute Discipline Referral Sheet
 - D) Planner – Code of Conduct, [TRIBES](#) (four agreements)
 - E) Reasons for Suspension
 - F) Discipline System RE: Discipline Referral Sheet

1. Greet students at the door as they come into the classroom

If nothing else, the act of greeting your students provides the students with a friendly face on the first day of the year/semester, and also lets them know that you will be looking them straight in the eye when talking to them throughout the semester.

2. Take attendance, then put the students in alphabetical order

When the bell rings, take attendance and then put the students in alphabetical order. Keep the rows short so that the students sitting at the back of the rows are as close to the front as possible. Explain to the students that seating them in alphabetical order makes it easier for you to learn their names quickly and for Supply Teachers to take the attendance. Be prepared though to move closer to the front of the room the students who have been identified as having special learning needs.

3. Handouts:

- A) Distribute Course Outline and go through it with the students
- B) Distribute [Student Information Sheet](#)
- C) Distribute [Discipline Referral Sheet](#)
- D) Student Planner – Code of Conduct, [TRIBES](#) (four agreements)
- E) Reasons for Suspension
- F) Discipline System RE: Discipline Referral Sheet

A) Distribute Course Outline and go through it with the students

Although it may sound like a simple step to distribute the Course Outline and go through it with the students, it is a very important step as it gives you a chance to explain

to students the major components of the course such as required pre-requisite courses, course content, assessments/exams, and general expectations for homework and classroom behaviour. By starting the “Handout Section” of the first day class by going over the Course Outline, you might discover a student who is in the wrong section or level or has not completed the appropriate pre-requisite course, and you will also be setting the stage to find out more about the students, as well as to discuss how discipline will be handled in your classroom.

B) Distribute [Student Information Sheet](#)

The next handout to distribute is the Student Information Sheet. As you can see from the hyperlink, this handout is intended to help you learn more about your students so that you can better meet their needs. As I have taught mostly English recently, you will also notice that it is set up for English, but you can easily save the sheet and change it for your particular subject area. After handing out the sheet, make sure that you move around the classroom to observe how adept the students are at filling in the information asked for on the form. Make note of things like difficult-to-read handwriting and who finishes the sheet quickly/takes longer to complete it, and also notice which of the students ask questions about the information to be entered in the different sections on the information sheet. Once the students have completed the sheets, you can get them to pass them (in order) to the first person in each row. This way, if you have seated the students alphabetically, then you will be able to collect the information sheets in alphabetical order – to be placed easily into your Teacher Binder – by just moving across the front of the room and picking up the sheets. Use this method to collect tests/assignments as well.

C) Distribute [Discipline Referral Sheet](#)

After you have collected the Student Information Sheets, it is time to distribute the Discipline Referral Sheet, have the students fill it in, and then start to explain how your classroom discipline policy will work. As the hyperlink shows, this is the form that you will use to record the incidents of misbehavior for each student that you will then be able to submit to the Administration if the situation warrants. Have the students start at the top of the sheet and fill in your name, the course, the class period and their name, but ensure that they leave the line where it says “Today’s Date” blank as that will be filled in on a future date, if and when you will be sending the student (and the form) to the office. Have the students hang on to the sheet and let them know that you are going to explain it in more detail shortly. But first, you are going to take some time to discuss your school’s Code of Conduct (often found in the Student Planner) and the four agreements of the TRIBES Learning Community Program.

D) Student Planner – Code of Conduct, [TRIBES](#) (four agreements)

As mentioned, your school’s Code of Conduct most likely can be found in the Student Planner, or perhaps on your school’s web site. At this point in the first day class, you will want to go through the main features of the Code of Conduct, highlighting such things as how the students should report absences to the Main Office, the consequences of repeated lates and unexplained absences, and so on. This is also the time that I talk about how the cornerstone of my classroom management for the semester will be based on the four agreements of the TRIBES Learning Community Program – Attentive Listening, Appreciation/No Putdowns, Mutual Respect, and the Right to Pass/Participate.

Many school boards – mine included – offer Professional Development training in the full TRIBES Learning Community Program, which I think is worthwhile. Having said that, the main concepts I have taken from the training are based on the four agreements, which I emphasize on the first day as well as regularly and as needed throughout the semester. By focusing on the four agreements while discussing your discipline system on the first day, you will let the students know in plain language what is expected of them in your classroom – and in the hallways – as well as during their co-curricular activities.

E) Reasons for Suspension

At this point in the first class, it is time to discuss the reasons for suspension for students in your district school board and/or province/state. For this you may need to do some investigating into the specific reasons for suspension – and the length of those suspensions – for your particular region, and you could then create a handout with the updated information, including the Reason for Suspension, the Length of the First Suspension, and the Length of Subsequent Suspension(s). In the Province of Ontario, students can be suspended for, among other issues, persistent truancy, habitual neglect, willful destruction of school property, bullying/fighting, and possessing/being under the influence of drugs/alcohol. I believe that it is very important for students to realize and understand what kinds of behaviour can lead to their being suspended, and I think it is especially important to go over this information before you move on to the final step in your first-day lesson plan – turning your attention back to the Discipline Referral Sheet to explain in detail and in practical terms how your discipline system will work in classroom situations.

F) Discipline System RE: [Discipline Referral Sheet](#)

It is time to return the attention of the class to the Discipline Referral Sheet and to go over how it ties into your overall discipline system. Start with having the students check that they have filled in the sheet properly. They will fill in your name and their own name and also the course and class period information, but tell them to leave the “Today’s Date” line blank as that will be filled in at a later date if they have to be sent to the Main Office to see an administrator. Then explain that the “Date/Disciplinary Measures/Corrective Measures” columns on the sheet are where you will record the details of any incidents where the student’s behaviour has crossed the line.

The key when dealing with a student whose behaviour has indeed crossed the line is to calmly ask the student to go out in the hall and wait for you. Then get your Teacher Binder off the teacher’s desk and proceed to talk to the student in the hall about why their behaviour is not acceptable. Be sure to remind the student about how their behaviour has contravened the classroom and/or school rules. Then, in the hallway with the student still there, fill in the Discipline Referral Sheet by recording the date, providing a brief description of the Disciplinary Problem and Corrective Measures (1st Warning, 2nd Warning, or Sent to See VP in Main Office). Remind the student that after the first Disciplinary Problem requiring a discussion in the hall, the student receives their 1st Warning, and after the second they will receive a 2nd Warning. With 2nd Warning, I would usually write, “After next problem, student will have to see VP.” I also would sometimes call home to speak to a parent/guardian after the 2nd Warning.

If a student needs to be sent to the hall for a third time, you will need to send them to the Main Office to see an administrator. In order to do this effectively, as usual,

calmly ask the student to meet you in the hall, and then get the Teacher Binder from your desk. Once you are in the hallway, remind the student (if you have not done so already) that this is his/her third discipline problem and therefore he/she will need to go to Main Office to see an administrator. Again, remind the student of the classroom/school rule(s) that he/she has broken and let him/her know that you are going to send the filled-in Discipline Referral Sheet to the administrator so that he or she can sign the Discipline Referral Sheet in the “Office” column. You can also remind the student that the administrator may decide to hand out punishment that he or she deems appropriate, which could range from detentions to suspension.

Toward the end of your First Day discussion to the entire class about the [Discipline Referral Sheet](#) and your overall discipline system, it is very important to point out that certain behaviours – such as fighting or swearing at a teacher, educational assistant (EA) or another student – will result in student(s) being sent directly to the Main Office, regardless of whether they have had their 2nd Warning yet or not. With this in mind, it is important to “expect the unexpected” and to be ready to deal with this kind of behaviour quickly and decisively. It is also vital to know exactly how to signal the Main Office from your classroom – in other words, where your P.A. System is actually located (in one classroom I was in, it was near the floor nestled behind a book shelf) – how the “Call” button works, and how well the office staff can hear you on the P.A. System from your room, so you will know how loudly you will have to speak.

In the case of a major incident, have the student(s) involved report to the Main Office, then signal the Main Office and tell the staff that you have just sent down the students because of a “fighting, swearing, etc. incident” and that you will send another

student down with a Discipline Referral Sheet with the details of the incident on it. Later that day, try to stop in to the Main Office to touch base with the appropriate VP or Principal as to what the follow-up discipline will be, and also to retrieve the Discipline Referral Sheet to return to your binder for future reference.

CHAPTER 4: STAYING ORGANIZED

While it is important to get off to a good start by having a successful first day, following the ASSETSS Approach will also allow you to stay organized throughout the semester by focusing on these six key areas:

1. Attendance
2. Using the Premier Planning System: [Canadian web site](#) and [American web site](#)
3. Palm Calendar (and Palm Tungsten E2 with foldout Keyboard)
4. ASUS Eee Pad Transformer
5. iHome iDM5 Executive Space-Saver Station
6. [MarkBook](#) or other marks program

1. Attendance

Taking accurate attendance is one of the most important responsibilities of a classroom teacher. Using the forms that can be printed from the MarkBook program or the Premier Planning System (more information below), you will be able to record absent and late students easily, as long as you do not forget to actually take the attendance at some point during the class period.

2. Using the Premier Planning System: [Canadian web site](#)/[American web site](#)

Premier offers a full range of Student and Teacher Planners. I suggest that you purchase the “Legacy Lesson Plan Book.” This allows you to have a planner that contains both a monthly calendar to record meetings/special events and a daily planner to

outline what activities you have done in your classes. It will help you stay organized for your meetings and other events and help you make an accurate daybook that you can refer back to whenever you teach the same courses again. The planner also has [Online Product Support](#), which allows anyone who has purchased the planner to click on www.premier.us/legacy or www.premier.ca/legacy in order to access an electronic component of the planner with the following features:

A) Lesson Plans – “Best practices” sample lesson plans are available which you can use as they are or edit yourself and then store on the computer and/or print off.

B) Teacher Records – These allow you to keep your students’ marks or attendance electronically in the same format as the printed version.

C) Forms – PDF versions of the forms provided in the Lesson Plan Book are provided so that you can print out extra copies in case you need them.

3. [Palm Calendar](#)

Palm wireless foldout Keyboard



During the 2006-2007 school year, I had the chance to teach a Grade 11 Workplace English class and a Grade 10 Academic English class with a full class set of Palm Pilots, which at the time was quite innovative. I found that using Palm Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) (they also made combination PDA and cell phones) could make dealing with your work as a teacher easier. The [Palm](#) web site (which has been

updated extensively since then) outlined how the Palm Desktop software that came with the PDA would allow you to transfer information RE: your day-to-day calendar, contacts, memos, etc. from the PDA to your computer at work or home. Teaching a course where all of the students had a Palm Pilot allowed me to cut down significantly on the number of handouts used in class due to the fact that the students were able to “beam” documents to each other, instead of passing back handout sheets. In addition, the nice thing about the Palm Tungsten E2 was that it came with a lightweight and easy-to-carry foldout keyboard, thereby allowing me to create documents basically anywhere I could find a flat surface. These days, many of these same features can be found on a smart phone or combined smart phone/tablet.

4. [ASUS Eee Pad Transformer](#)



One example of the latest innovation of smart phone/tablet technology is the ASUS Eee Pad Transformer. This is a tablet that has an attachable full keyboard and a battery that lasts for 16 hours. Recently, I have often seen educators and administrators using iPads (with or without keyboards) at meetings, and it seems to me that the future of Personal Computing in Education is going to revolve around smart phones and tablets in order to allow for “mobile learning” to occur. Indeed, for the upcoming academic year (2012-13), in our local area alone, there are going to be pilot projects for mobile learning at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary level. To help in their use for teachers

and students, accessories for smart phones and tablets are now available from websites such as iHome Audio.

5. [The iDM5 Executive Space-Saver Station](#)



Although tablets and smart phones are extremely mobile and should offer plenty of versatility in many situations related to teaching and learning, they are not always easy to use for word processing. The iDM5 from iHome Audio is a combination keyboard-speaker system that allows for effective typing on a smart phone or tablet and also uses Bluetooth to simultaneously stream music. In addition, there is a built-in microphone that can facilitate the use of the unit as a speaker phone or for video conferencing, which I definitely foresee becoming very popular in the education arena in the years to come.

6. [MarkBook](#) or other marks program

Most school boards now provide teaching staff with a computer program to assist in the calculation of marks. For the past ten years or so, my board has provided teachers with a program called Markbook. Regardless of the features of the specific Marks program, the important part is to quickly learn how to use the program and then to make sure you are using all of the “save time” features. For example, if you are teaching multiple sections of the same course, try to find out how to go about copying or “cloning” the details of the assessments that are the same, so that you do not have to re-type the information again and again while you are setting up the mark calculations.

CHAPTER 5: KEEPING STUDENTS MOTIVATED

Once the semester is underway, there are strategies that you can use to keep students motivated. These include:

1. Getting the students to want to work for you – use Non-Confrontational Language
2. Focusing on being a good teacher, not a nice teacher
3. [Monthly Self-Evaluation](#) (templates) and [Monthly Self-Evaluation Example](#)
4. [Reading Record](#) (template) and [Reading Record Example](#)
5. Using Reality TV as a Teaching Tool/Reward ([Amazing Race Story Map](#))
6. Student Self-Publishing Projects (Websites, eBooks, Hardcover Books)

1. Getting the students to want to work for you – use Non-Confrontational Language

After greeting your students individually as they enter the classroom, once the bell rings one effective way to begin each class is to say “Take out your notebook, turn to your Monthly Self-Evaluation and fill it in.” Doing this as the first thing in every class helps you in several ways. First, it gets the students’ attention and moves them from talking to each other to doing an individual action that they are to do quietly. Secondly, it allows you to see which students have not brought their notebook or a pen to class, and you can assist them to get paper and a pen for the remaining activities to come in the class. Thirdly, it helps set a positive tone and to create a sense of order and work ethic to each class. If a student or students continue to talk during the time that they are supposed

to be filling in their Self-Evaluation, you can say, “It’s not time to talk now, it’s time to quietly fill in your Self-Evaluation and then we’ll get started with today’s work.”

Other keys to getting your students to want to work for you are to praise the class as a whole when they work well and stay on task and to use Non-Confrontational Language when they start to get off the task at hand. Effective statements you can use to deal with students who start to talk or who are just not doing what they have been instructed to do include:

- A) “It’s time to get to work.”
- B) “Let’s get back what we’re supposed to be working on.”
- C) “Is there a problem?” or “What is the problem?” Never “What is *your* problem?”

Making sure to use non-confrontational language will help you avoid escalating confrontations with individuals in front of the entire class, which can end badly because students are trying to save in front of their peers and may say things in the heat of the moment that they don’t really mean, but often result in their being sent to the office to see an administrator.

2. Focusing on being a “good” teacher, not a “nice” teacher

Teaching is hard work, and doing it effectively requires always treating students with respect, while still being tough with students at times, which takes courage. The goal is to be a “good” teacher, not a “nice” teacher. The good teacher will set the rules and boundaries for the class and stick to them, knowing that although it may not make the teacher popular in the short term, the class will run more smoothly in the long run as a

result. The nice teacher may set some rules for the class, but over the course of the semester will let them slide in order to not be seen as “the bad guy” by the class.

It is important to note that the good teacher who establishes class rules and is tough enough to enforce them (using the non-confrontational language mentioned earlier) can still demonstrate caring for his/her students. One simple way to do this is to always say “Bless You” when someone in your class sneezes. Other ways include greeting the students individually as they enter the class and asking them about how things are going with their part-time job or sports/clubs that they are involved with (which you would know about from the information that the students have submitted on their Student Information Sheets.)

3. [Monthly Self-Evaluation](#) (template with blanks), [Monthly Self-Evaluation](#) (template), [Monthly Self-Evaluation Example](#)

The Monthly Self-Evaluation is a sheet that I have used with great success, and it can be used effectively in any subject area. Just before handing it out to the class, I talk about how self-evaluation is a form of evaluation that is commonly used in post-secondary learning, especially in a course like ENG 311 (Oral Communication) that I have taught several times at Lambton College. As evident in the example provided above, once you have a template on your computer, it is quite easy to alter it to the subsequent months by changing the month at the top and then switching around the dates for the days of the month as needed. After all the students have received the sheet, I usually draw their attention to the “special dates to note,” which can also easily be added.

The Monthly Self-Evaluation Sheet is good to have as a way to focus the class's attention once the class bell has rung. I may be conversing individually with the students as they arrive to class, but once the bell rings I usually say, "Okay, time to get started. Take out your notebook and turn to your Monthly Evaluation Sheet. Give yourself 1 mark for being here on time and 1 mark for having all your "stuff" (pen/pencil, notebook, textbook/reading book, etc.). Similarly, this is also an excellent way to wrap things up just before the bell rings at the end of class. This is when I say, "Before you pack up, turn to your Self-Evaluation Sheet and give yourself a mark out of 3 for Participation and a mark out of 2 for Polite Co-operation. Now write in the total out of 7 at the bottom of the column. On Fridays, they would do the totals for the day and the week (out of 35) and then on the last Friday of the month, the students turn the sheet in to be marked. As far as the mark is concerned, I would give a mark out of 20, looking for totals of at least 30 for each week.

4. [Reading Record \(template\)](#) and [Reading Record Example](#)

Another regular assessment tool that I have used that has worked surprisingly well is the Reading Record, which I adapted from Appendix B in *I Read It, But I Don't Get It* by Carlene Beers. In order to help improve students' reading ability, in English classes I would start each class with 30 minutes of Silent Reading, and then have the students fill in the Reading Record. The key to having this work successfully is to take the whole class to the school library and have the librarian talk to them about how to locate grade-appropriate books – I have always preferred to have the students select books as opposed

to magazines – and then to help students find fiction or non-fiction books that they are very interested in.

As the sheet says, after the students have finished reading for 30 minutes at the start of class, they are to record their name, the date, the name of the book, and they page numbers that they have just read. Then they summarize what they have read in at least four sentences. Finally, they offer a Personal Response of at least four sentences.

The sheets are turned in at the end of the week and are marked basically according whether the students have followed the instructions or not. In other words, if they fill in the name of the book and the page numbers read, they would receive a mark of 1 out of 1. Accordingly, if they provide a coherent summary of at least 4 sentences, they would receive a mark of 2 out of 2. A summary with 1 to 3 sentences results in a mark of 1 out of 2. Similarly a Personal Response of 4 or more sentences would net a mark of 2 out of 2, while a shorter response would result in a mark of 1 out of 2. Sections left blank on the Reading Record are given a mark of zero. With all this in mind, as long as students record the name of their book and the page numbers they have just read, and as long as they write something in the Summary and Personal Response sections, they will receive a mark of at least 3 out of 5. The reading time at the beginning of class can be used effectively by teachers as well – to mark student homework or the Reading Records, or to do some reading of your own.

5. Using Reality TV as a Teaching Tool/Reward ([Amazing Race Story Map](#))

I and several other teachers have found that using Reality TV shows (such as “The Amazing Race,” “Survivor,” and “Dragon’s Den” and/or “Shark Tank”) as a

teaching tool/reward can be a very effective way of motivating your students to work well in class, while completing their required work. The idea is brilliant in its simplicity: choose a reality TV series for your class to follow – “The Amazing Race” is a good one because it has two separate seasons during the school year, one for each semester – and let the students know that they will be watching it every Friday in class, as long as they get their work done and demonstrate appropriate classroom behaviour during the rest of the week. Then, if anyone in the class is not working hard enough or is behaving inappropriately, you can simply remind the whole class that it is time to get serious again because if the class does not cover all of the work for the week, then there won’t be enough time to watch your Friday show and therefore they will have to do work on Friday instead. Just make sure to skip the Friday viewing if the students don’t deserve it!

By using the reality show’s official network web site (i.e. “The Amazing Race” – [CBS](#) or [CTV](#)) for background information about its format and participants for your students, you can introduce your show on the Friday before you plan to view the first episode. You can either record the episodes or you may be able to show them from the web site as well. To ensure that the students approach watching the episodes as a serious media assignment, make sure to have them turn in for marks some sort of handout sheet – such as [The Amazing Race Story Map](#) – that deals with the content of each episode. With this in mind, I always leave a small number of lights on in the classroom so the students will be able to see their handout sheet and fill it in while they are viewing the episode.

Based on the background information given before we start watching “The Amazing Race” episodes, the students work in pairs to fill in a [Prediction Sheet](#) where

they pick the team that they think will win, and also list three reasons why they have chosen that team. Once we start watching the episodes, the students fill in the Story Map sheet as each episode moves along, starting with the first locations visited and the order of the teams' departure. The students will also write down the details of the Detour and Roadblock, as well as the problems experienced by the teams (which almost always occur just before a commercial break.) When the episode nears its completion, the students record the 1st place team and the prize(s) they win, as well as the 2nd place and last place teams. In addition, the students note whether the last place team was eliminated or not and if not, what conditions they must endure during the next episode. Once the sheets are completed and turned in, they are fairly straightforward to mark.

Using "The Amazing Race" as a weekly motivating force has proven to be extremely effective in helping my students to stay on task and complete their work over the rest of the week. The students started to connect with the show's challenges and team members, and it has also given them a great view of the world's many diverse cultures.

6. Student Self-Publishing Projects (Websites, eBooks, Hardcover Books)

Another area to consider as an effective way to keep students motivated is to get the students working on self-publishing projects. Depending on the subject(s) you are teaching, class assignments could be given that would allow the students to self-publish websites, E-Books, and/or hardcover books. The advantage of incorporating student self-publishing projects is that for today's students – who are very adept at using computers – these assignments are fairly straightforward to complete, and the best part is that they can be accessed through Internet-based resources at little or no cost.

One self-publishing project that students may have had a chance to attempt is to publish their own website. Even if they have – and the students who have could provide assistance to those attempting it for the first time – websites such as <http://www.wix.com> will assist the students to create their own Google-friendly websites for free.

Recently, I read a *Toronto Star* [newspaper article](#) about a website called [Student Treasures](#) which provides for free (in a Mail-In Kit) all the needed materials and one hardcover book per student (additional copies are \$20 each). A key feature of the Student Treasures Program is that it is set up for students of all grade levels – elementary (K-Grade 6), middle school, high school, and even college/university. Staff members who have introduced the program to their schools have described it in glowing terms, emphasizing that it has “made writing meaningful and purposeful” (Rushowy, 2012).

In addition to hardcover books, your students could complete projects where they would create their own e-Books and perhaps even self-publish their e-Books on Amazon. A quick search on YouTube results in the listing of many videos that explain how to self-publish eBooks on Amazon, Kindle, and the iTunes Store, often at no cost at all to the students. It is also important to note that it is not necessary to have a Kindle eReader in order to read these eBooks, as it is quite easy to download the free “Kindle for PC” app, which allows a person to read Kindle eBooks on a laptop or desktop computer.

Because I have just learned of these Internet resources recently, I have not had a chance to try self-publishing assignments with my own students as of yet. I do believe though that these projects could be reflective of Differentiated Instruction and could also prove to be a very effective way to produce authentic assessments of student learning.

CHAPTER 6: WORKING WELL, BEING HEALTHY AND HAPPY

One of the best things about teaching is that the struggles of working with sometimes difficult-to-deal-with students is that those same struggles can actually increase the level of reward teachers can have from their work. While helping certain students make positive breakthroughs brings a great deal of satisfaction to teachers, it can also cause a great deal of stress. Fortunately, the following can help you to manage the stress:

1. Proper Nutrition
2. Exercise/Recreation, Eating, and Sleeping
3. Making the Most of Your Benefit Plan (Chiropractic, Therapeutic Massage, Orthotics)
4. Working Well with Colleagues (Co-Mentoring), Collaboration, Sharing Resources
5. Release of Emotions (Positive Venting)

1. Proper Nutrition

When trying to deal effectively with stress, it is important to focus on proper nutrition so that you will have the vitamins and minerals needed to help your body deal more effectively with stress when you find yourself in tense situations. Eating a well-balanced low-fat/high-fibre diet can help you deal with the ups and downs of teaching, and can also help to keep your energy level high. If you are finding that you are eating

well, but are still lacking energy, check with your physician about the possibility of supplementing your diet with a multivitamin that would be taken once a day.

2. Exercise/Recreation, Eating, and Sleeping

Since teaching can be a stressful job on a day-to-day basis, exercise, eating, and sleeping are the keys to maintaining your personal wellness. Depending on your situation – teaching/coaching assignment, years of experience, starting a new role, trying to complete a Master’s degree or other courses for certification, and so on – your time can be quite limited. In addition, most teaching positions involve some coaching or other school-related club or committee work, which also cuts into your personal time; however, it is imperative that you make time to exercise. Fitting a workout in between work and supper will help to flush out the tension that can build up in your muscles throughout the day, and can also raise your energy level overall, which will prove helpful in tackling the night-time marking and preparation that is often required in teaching.

Once I became a father for the first time, I found that I just did not have the same amount of time to spend working out, and as a result I started focusing on shorter, more intense workouts just due to lack of time. To my surprise, I have been able to maintain my fitness level by working out for less time, and have even found that overall I have more energy as I am less fatigued using this new form of working out. For more information on workouts that are short in duration but high in intensity, you can check out the [Body for Life](#) website and the [10-Minute Trainer](#) website, but make sure to consult with your physician before starting any exercise program. In addition to exercise,

it is important to try to find time to take part in recreational activities (sports, music, etc.) that help to lift your spirit on a regularly-scheduled basis.

Making time to eat healthy meals – breakfast, lunch, and supper – is also a key factor in working well and being happy as a teacher, especially in your first year of teaching when you are so busy preparing lessons for courses that you are teaching for the first time. Make sure that you take the time to eat at least a light breakfast before work. It is probably a good idea to try to take your lunch to school as often as you can, as it will save you money in the long run and you can't necessarily be sure that your school's cafeteria is going to offer a healthy choice for lunch each day of the week. You can quickly make a sandwich or two and pack it with some pre-packaged salad, salad dressing, and your choice of fruit (apples, bananas, pears, grapes, and so on). In order to avoid spoilage, try to find a refrigerator to store your lunch in until your lunch period arrives. Drinking water regularly throughout the school day will also help you keep up your energy level, especially in the warmer months in schools without air conditioning.

As for supper, preparing a healthy meal with limited time can be a challenge, but there are things you can do to maximize the nutritional value while minimizing preparation time. For very busy nights, there are several nutritional options to be found in the frozen food aisle of your grocery store, and these frozen dinners can often be microwaved in only 5-6 minutes; just let them cool and add pre-packaged salad and you're all set. For the nights you do have time to cook, the [Body for Life](#) web site has nutrition information – including recipes – in addition to the aforementioned workout information.

The final key to working and being well – again especially in the extra-busy first few years of teaching – is ensuring that you get enough sleep. Although the amount of sleep that individuals need to be their best at work can vary widely, my advice to all teachers is to not stay up past 12 midnight to work on preparing classes and/or marking. After midnight, your mind can become so tired that you'll actually be taking much longer to complete your prepping/marking, so it would just make more sense to invest that time into getting some extra sleep instead.

Since it is likely that you will have some later nights, especially in the first few years of teaching, it makes sense to think of trying to get so many hours of sleep per week as opposed to so much per night. For example, you can think about getting 49 hours a week as opposed to 7 hours per night. That way, if you are up later one night, you can make up for it the next night, or you perhaps on the weekend. Consider my personal situation – it doesn't always work out, but I shoot for 49-50 hours of sleep a week – at least 6½ hours of sleep on weeknights ($5 \times 6\frac{1}{2} = 32\frac{1}{2}$) and 8½ hours on weekend nights (which may include afternoon naps!), for a total of 17 hours on weekends, and a grand total of 49½ hours for the week.

3. Making the Most of Your Benefit Plan (Chiropractic, Therapeutic Massage, Orthotics)

Another key area of consideration when trying to deal effectively with the day-to-day stress of teaching is making the most of your benefit plan so that you can take full advantage of features that you may have benefit coverage for such as Chiropractic, therapeutic massage, and/or orthotics. Since teachers spend a lot of their day on their

feet, they can experience aches and pains in their legs and back. As a result, it is often beneficial to get regular spinal adjustments from a Chiropractor, and to try to have a therapeutic massage from a Registered Massage Therapist (RMT) once a month as well. Conveniently, many Chiropractors have partnered with RMTs in their offices, or at least can recommend one to their patients. I also recommend that teachers strongly consider making a visit to a Certified Pedorthist to be fitted for orthotic insoles to be worn in their shoes at school, as I have found orthotics helpful in lessening leg pain and back aches.

4. Working Well with Colleagues (Co-Mentoring), Collaboration, Sharing

Resources:

One of the best things about teaching is that you don't have to do it alone – in other words, you are able to collaborate with your fellow department members and share resources with them. When you are new to a teaching position, it is important to talk to the other teachers in your department to find out how – in general – a certain course is taught. As you gain experience, you will be the one to pass on the information about how courses are taught. I believe it is important to try to share resources with your colleagues in your department and your school, and that it is just as important, if not moreso, to make sure that you remember to return the handout sheets you have borrowed to your colleague's binder, so that the complete course is always easily accessible to all teachers.

Several years ago, as the new Program Leader (Department Head) of a secondary school English department, I carried out an Action Research Project that focused on building a Professional Learning Community within the department. As part of the Action Research Project, I interviewed four of the teachers in the department. The

participants offered several recommendations for further actions to be taken in the implementation of the Professional Learning Community. One of the teachers expressed an interest in attending a professional conference or District Subject Meeting, and also felt that an “inviting” English office would contribute strongly to increased collaboration and professional learning (Shaw, 2005):

That’s the kind of thing that will lead to sharing and a more friendly atmosphere in the department. So that physiological change – having a decent room as your room to share materials. Also, at another secondary school I noticed they have a converted classroom and you have couches in there, a phone in there you have all kinds of space; all sorts of theater information, curriculum information, binders of resource materials are sitting out there. You can just sit down, relax, and look at the materials. And it’s been that way for some time. So in order to encourage that kind of collaboration, you need to have a facility that is inviting.

5. Release of Emotions (Positive Venting)

The interviewed teacher’s comments about having an inviting work area highlight the importance of teachers finding a spot to work that is positive for them and their spirit. Once you have had a chance to work at a school for a couple of weeks, you will start to have a pretty good idea about where you will want to spend your non-class time (before and after school, lunch, and prep time). At this point, it is key to figure out which locations are frequented by those teachers who tend to release their emotions related to their outlook on their work and/or students in a negative and cynical way and to do your level best to steer clear of them. Being around teachers and staff members who are able to frame their complaints in a positive way, where they are discussing factors that would contribute to finding solutions to problems – at least most of the time – will make a big impact on continuing to feel good about your teaching job and the strong impact you are having on your students, and in turn will also add to your overall happiness at work.

It is also helpful to remember that you can serve an important role in the wellness of other teachers by being a supportive listener. Invariably, teachers can have their lives outside of teaching thrown for a loop as a result of situations such as a serious personal or family illness, a marriage breakdown, and/or a death or new addition in their family, so any support you can give colleagues will help them to cope, at least while they are at school.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

As I enter my 23rd year in education, I find it difficult to believe sometimes that my teaching career has lasted this long. Looking back, it is evident that my first year of teaching was a real struggle, but what I failed to realize at that time was that I was doing a good job, and that the job would get easier in the years following. In the beginning, I didn't keep track of my lessons as well as I could have, and it seemed like my approach to classroom discipline lacked any real structure. I did have a good rapport with students though, as demonstrated when a student from L'Amoreaux C.I., whose attendance had started to slip, confided in me that she was pregnant and that I was the first teacher or staff member at the school that she had shared that information with. My Principal that year encouraged me by emphasizing that I could always learn to ask better questions of my students in class, but I couldn't learn to have the kind of strong rapport with students that she knew I had. I realize now that building and maintaining a strong rapport with students was the first step in the development of my "teach from the heart" approach to teaching.

As the years passed, I gained a great deal of knowledge about how to handle the job better through the graduate and post-graduate courses I took through the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of The University of Toronto (OISE-UT). One of my professors at OISE-UT was Dr. Andy Anderson, who really taught from the heart. His educational philosophy could be summed up in the words "Every child is a champion." My extension of Andy's philosophy is that as teachers, one of our most important roles is to champion the champions in our classes, so that they can feel motivated to learn and

grow to reach their full potential. I was looking forward to working on my thesis at OISE-UT with Andy – I had met him when he was my Health professor in the B.Ed. program at The University of Western Ontario – but unfortunately he passed away as a result of a brain tumour. I often think about the ways he taught from the heart and how much he inspired me and many other teachers to be champions of champions.



Dr. Andy Anderson, my Education Professor at UWO and OISE-UT:

A true Champion of Champions

With the OISE-UT courses and more years of experience under my belt, including several as a Guidance Counsellor and Curriculum Leader (Department Head), I was able to start putting together and implementing the pieces of the comprehensive ASSETSS Approach. And the feedback I received let me know that I was on the right track. I was pleased to see that the students responded very well to the new things I tried, such as the Reading Record and “The Amazing Race” (our weekly audio-visual story) – even now if I run into students who graduated two or three years ago, they will often ask if I am still watching “The Amazing Race,” and then proceed to tell me who they think is going to win the current edition of the show.

The best endorsement of the success of the ASSETSS Approach though came from an experienced Supply Teacher who told me the day after she covered for me that one of my classes – a Grade 12 College Preparation English class – was the best class she had ever covered in her many years of Supply Teaching. She explained that she was incredibly impressed by how the students came in, got right into the Silent Reading, filled in their Reading Records, and then got right to work on and completed their assigned work. Once I heard this from her, I felt vindicated for all of the components of the ASSETSS Approach that I had put into place and my confidence was buoyed. My system really was working! I had finally been able to put it together – teaching from the heart in combination with an effective discipline system where students are motivated to learn and to get their work done.

I found myself thinking about student motivation at the SWAC Graduation Ceremony I mentioned in the preface. As the night went on, I started to consider just how far the SWAC Graduates had come to make it to graduation, especially the ones – like Shantel – who had started with me when they were in Grade 9. As Shantel started to cry and then sob while reading her speech, I made the decision to step up beside her, and as I lent my support, I was proud to see her not give up as she was able to complete the speech without missing a single, heartfelt word. In a way, that moment in time typifies teaching from the heart – lending support to students by standing alongside and encouraging them to be their best.

With my third year in the SWAC Program at Lambton College now underway, I have been reflecting on how fortunate I feel to be teaching from the heart as part of such a worthwhile Student Success initiative. I also find it intriguing that my mother started

out working in a similar program when she started teaching at Lambton College back in 1975. A teach-from-the-heart instructor herself, whose teaching career began in a one-room country school, I remember how she would sometimes become frustrated with the fact that she could not always reach her students. Based on my own experience, I still think it is a worthwhile goal to want to reach every student, even if it can lead to frustration at times. With this in mind, I think it is important to note this quote from Robert Louis Stevenson: “Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.”

As you finish this eBook and begin to implement the aspects of the ASSETSS Approach into your teaching practice, consider these words of wisdom from George Bernard Shaw: “Life is not about finding yourself, life is about creating yourself.” Utilizing these teaching strategies from the heart will allow you to make adjustments to your teaching that will help to create and maintain a highly-motivating learning environment, which in turn can make a huge impact in the lives of your students and allow you to reap some huge benefits in the classroom. And when all is said and done, that is what teaching from the heart is all about.

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