

Introduction

Welcome to *Keys to the Secondary Classroom!* This book was written to help make your teaching life easier and, in the process, improve the academic success for your students. We hope to provide you, the teacher, with tools and resources to be able to start the school year with a solid foundation. We would like you to begin ready to enjoy your students and help them to succeed in your content area. Although our target audience for this book is new teachers, we hope to offer something of value to everyone who would like to strengthen or renew aspects of his or her teaching practice.

Preparing adolescent students for the increasing demands of our world is a complex and challenging activity. It takes great commitment, organization, subject matter knowledge, and passion. Those of you who have chosen to teach in secondary schools also have that particular gene that makes teenagers and preteens look like some of the most engaging, lively people around.

In our work of observing and supporting thousands of new teachers, we have found that the apparently seamless teaching observed in the classrooms of exemplary teachers is actually the product of hundreds of small steps. By naming and demystifying these steps, we offer more teachers the opportunity to learn and internalize the components of seamless teaching. A firm foundation in planning, management, curriculum design, and assessment frees teachers to put more energy into the creativity and soul of their practice.

We hope that, over time, your unique teaching style will emerge and that your highest vision for becoming a teacher is realized. This book offers ideas for organizing curriculum and systems that in turn will help you to realize that vision, share your strengths with students, and meet a myriad of professional expectations. We would like to help you meet high standards for all students, including those of diverse language and learning abilities.

Much of what our book has to offer is derived from the work of the New Teacher Center (NTC) at the University of California, Santa Cruz, a statewide and national center dedicated to advancing the work of those who support beginning teachers and principals. The NTC now serves principals, mentors, and teachers in more than 35 states across the United States. However, our original models for effective teaching, learning, and mentoring were based in the work of our local New Teacher Project, where dedicated teams of support providers have served thousands of local teachers since 1988. We see induction as an opportunity to shape the norms and culture of the profession. We are committed to developing teachers who are thoughtful and reflective, work collaboratively with colleagues, and approach their teaching with a questioning and problem-solving spirit. The work of the NTC includes research, and we have been able to discover and document a clear relationship between mentoring beginning teachers and student achievement gains.

In this spirit, our book attempts to offer you actual keys to the classroom, a compilation of tools and insights that we hope will create a solid foundation for a successful career in education. Here are the highlights of the chapters:

- Chapter 1, “The Adolescent Learner,” describes some of the particular strengths and challenges of working with the adolescent student, along with tips for harnessing adolescent energy and steering it in a productive direction.
- Chapter 2 brings you directly into “The Nuts and Bolts of Getting Started,” helping to identify the many dimensions of preparation and organization for new teachers. We walk through a step-by-step overview of preparing your classroom, materials, resources, routines, and procedures as well as identifying key people who can help. The chapter ends with a comprehensive checklist, collecting all the tasks in one place for an efficient overview.
- Chapter 3 takes us into the nitty-gritty of “Rules, Routines, and Procedures.” We want to take the mystery out of setting clear expectations for student behavior, which, once established, allows us to really teach. In this chapter, we look at both prevention and intervention; positive and negative consequences; and ongoing procedures for homework, classroom management, equipment care, and more.
- In Chapter 4, we describe a variety of activities and teaching strategies that create positive classroom climates, establish cooperative norms, and allows students to build effective teams for academic work. “Community and Team Building” is an essential part of creating a positive and effective classroom environment in secondary schools.
- In Chapter 5, we take a long-range view of planning in the “Big-Picture Guide to Standards-Based Curriculum and Instruction.” Before planning day-to-day, we need a bigger picture of what it is we want to teach and why. Chapter 5 presents ideas and resources for making a yearlong plan. It also provides short teaching units and themes, links curriculum to standards, and offers other considerations for planning.
- Chapter 6 brings us back to the level of “Strategies for Daily Lesson Planning and Student Engagement.” In this chapter, we offer a variety of teaching strategies that can be applied across content areas to engage a wide range of students in whatever it is you want to teach. We provide a template for daily lesson planning that serves as both an organizer and a foundation for effective teaching and learning.
- Chapter 7, “Planning for the First Two Weeks of Math Class,” and Chapter 8, “Planning for the First Two Weeks of English and Social Studies Class,” offer step-by-step lesson plans by exemplary secondary math and language arts teachers for beginning the year. They weave together the elements of organization, rules, procedures, community building, student engagement, and content-area teaching. Feel free to borrow from and make them your own.
- In Chapter 9, we offer several concrete strategies that secondary teachers across the content areas can integrate into their teaching to

improve students' abilities for *reading to learn*. How about secondary students who struggle to read grade-level text? For new and interested teachers, "Supporting Secondary Students to Read Subject Matter Text" reviews what constitutes *effective* reading skills and how you might support students to develop both general as well as subject-specific ways to use the skills.

- Chapter 10, "Teaching for English Language Learner Success," offers suggestions for identifying language needs and then offers a variety of teaching strategies geared toward improving the academic success of English learners. Larger and larger percentages of our students are struggling with both reading and writing proficiencies in academic English. Language issues are evident in immigrant students and many others who have lived in the United States for generations.
- Chapter 11 offers a closer look at the area of "Assessment of Student Learning." How do we gather ongoing information about whether students are learning what we are teaching? How do we design all our lessons with outcomes and evidence of learning in mind? In this chapter, we offer user-friendly means of integrating assessment into the daily work of teaching.
- Chapter 12, "Communication With Parents," describes simple means of making and maintaining contact with parents throughout the year. How do we make the essential link between home and school as a secondary teacher with up to 180 students? We provide you with premade parent letters in both English and Spanish to communicate on a variety of topics.
- The Epilogue's theme is "Sustaining a Passion for Teaching." As we bring the book to a close, we want to send you on your way with the knowledge that there is no better work you can be doing. How do we keep our heads and hearts engaged in what is one of the most demanding and, at the same time, satisfying professions? We want you to be able to settle in for the long haul, know you are really making a difference, and have fun at the same time.

At the back of the book, you will find a resource that includes sample class guidelines. These guidelines were developed by a teacher to be used at the outset of the school year, and they may be helpful to you as you set up your course expectations and communicate with students about how they can be successful in your course.

In addition, we have compiled and included a list of well-thumbed Key Resources for Secondary Teachers. This list is organized by topical category and includes print and online resources that may be helpful to you in your practice.