

INTRODUCTION

Being a subject-matter expert is not always synonymous with being an effective educator. This situation exists because new and practicing faculty, who lack professional teacher training, can find teaching to be very challenging. In spite of their best intentions to provide students with optimal learning conditions, educators make mistakes. This is due to many reasons such as simply the human factor, the complexity of the role, and believing in two harmful myths or misconceptions.

Myth #1: Teaching is easy: anyone can do it. If you can do a task well, then you can teach others to do it. In other words, subject matter experts/specialists are inherently good teachers.

The fact is that effective teaching is a learned skill. It is complex, demanding work that requires high levels of creativity, adaptability, thoughtful planning, and resourcefulness. While there are many experts who excel in their specific field, many do not have the ability to automatically translate that knowledge into effective classroom teaching.

Myth #2: Teaching is telling.

The fact is that although many people learned this way, new times require new methods. Our 21st century students are dramatically different than those of the 20th century, from which many educators come. We also have access to brain research and evidence-based principles regarding how people learn.

Purpose of This Book

Mistakes in teaching span a wide spectrum of beliefs and behaviors that can inhibit and prevent student learning. Preventing mistakes, a major purpose of this book, helps to create and maintain a highly effective teaching-learning process. Other purposes include:

- To help new and seasoned educators develop and maintain the mindset that a mistake is just you learning how not to do something. As John Wooden explains, “If you’re not making mistakes, then you’re not doing anything.”
- To prevent educators from making mistakes or having them escalate into habitual mistakes by:
A) becoming aware of potential mistakes, B) realizing the potential problems that may result from mistakes, and C) implementing preventative strategies. This book is formatted accordingly.
- To hold higher education to a higher standard: Research indicates that the one factor that most strongly influences quality education is not money or equipment but the teacher. Fortunately and typically, teachers of students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 are required to be certified in teaching. Unfortunately and typically, no such certification is required to teach students beyond grade 12. Basically, being an “expert” in his/her field of work is often considered sufficient. This acceptance is unfortunate, considering the cost of tuition and the dependence of the larger community upon an educated populace and workforce. Fortunately, some colleges and universities are beginning to address this issue by instituting professional teacher-training programs for teaching at the higher education level.

Victoria Nesnick strongly supports this movement and is helping to meet this challenge in various ways. At Hofstra University she teaches the graduate course *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. Independently, she provides materials, workshops, and consulting services regarding what instructors should

do to be effective educators and also what they should not do, which is her rationale for this book. It is also one of her answers to the nation's call for more effective educators at all levels of education.

Victoria's Reasons for Using Quotations

In an age of information overload, quotes serve the following purposes:

- They are, “powerful tools to call on your best, help calm your nerves and put you in a positive mood right before an otherwise stressful event.”
- “Quotations help us remember the simple yet profound truths that give life perspective and meaning. When it comes to life's most important lessons, we can all use gentle reminders.”
~Chriswell Freeman
- “The wisdom of the wise and the experience of the ages, may be preserved through quotations.”
~Benjamin Disraeli

Please Remember

“Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.” ~Winston Churchill