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Preface

This bank of tools and techniques that will produce **explosions** in the classroom is the result of several years of researching, collecting and field-testing a wide variety of ideas and activities for middle years students and teachers.

Much of the handbook's success is due to the work of many educators who have dedicated their lives to the early adolescent. It is hoped that this synthesis of creative and workable methods and materials will serve as a fuse to further ignite the enthusiasm and imaginations of those who are 'caught in the middle'.

At the end of each section, application and practice activities are included to facilitate action research and thoughtful reflection about the content. Often, reading about ideas and theories sounds good but many teachers remain skeptical about how this works in a real classroom. Using these activities enables the classroom practitioner to be convinced by what they see and do.

Teachers can work through the book on their own or as a team. Keeping a journal or a portfolio of your learning and ideas is always advised to make the most of your development.

The application and practice activities fall into three categories:

Classroom research: The vast majority of the activities fall into this category and activities are provided to test out the strategies. Teachers are encouraged to implement the strategy, and reflect on the effectiveness of the activity on student attitudes and learning.

Discussion: These activities require discussion either with classes, or with a group of other teachers. In many cases it would be good to discuss the issues with both groups and compare the outcomes.

Personal reflection: There are many questions that allow you to focus on your philosophy of teaching and learning. It is also important to remember that personal reflection is a part of each of the classroom research and discussion activities.

Enjoy this book.

Foreword

The presumed gap between theory and practice is frequently cited and universally bemoaned. There continues to be a belief that inevitably theory and practice are like east and west and 'never the twain shall meet'. Too often an education book is seen as 'long on theory and short on practice'. On the other hand, many publications addressed directly to teachers are labelled as 'just cookbooks' to be followed simplistically, good activities but not particularly related to major objectives or undergirded by proven theory.

This volume provides a rare and superior exception to this theory-practice dichotomy. I know of no better melding of sound theory, well documented and adequately elaborated and effective practices focused on significant educational objectives. The book's thrust is, as well, on the years ahead, the needs of tomorrow's adults, not merely on a limited concern over the simplest 'basics'.

A Handbook for Explosive, Engaging, Enriching Classroom Strategies is concerned primarily with instruction. It does not set forth curriculum content, subject matter as such. The handbook centres on methods and activities that lead to the enlargement and development of critically important intellectual skills. It shows how to differentiate instruction, giving both full directions and ample examples. It draws on the work of recognised scholars and researchers such as Johnson and Johnson, prime developers of the increasingly popular cooperative learning approach.

Its value is not limited to any one or two subject areas. A review of the table of contents will reveal the extent of its coverage. More effective use of the textbook is discussed as well as such innovative topics as shoebox learning and gaming and simulation.

The book is formatted in a manner that makes it a sound text, to be read and re-read, while, at the same time, it is planned so that appropriate activities can readily be put to immediate use in the classroom. The appendices are chock-full of reproducible classroom-ready activities.

Middle years teachers who recognise the limited value of typical instructional procedures when applied to these mercurial youngsters will find the richness of these resources a delight. Here is a 'bank of tools and techniques for producing **explosions** in the classroom' and a means of bringing joy to the early adolescents who inhabit it.

John H. Lounsbury,
Editor NMSA Publications

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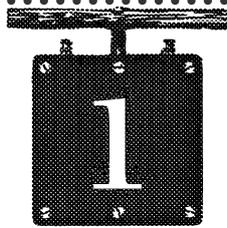
Educating students of today for the world of tomorrow

Education, by its very nature, is future oriented and should be presented in such a fashion. The student should learn information and skills today which will be of value in the future tomorrow. The child learns so the adult will know (Whaley, 1984). Today's students will spend the great bulk of their lives in the twenty-first century – a marvel that still boggles the minds of most parents and educators serving the young people in this generation. It is hard for us to believe that these children may do most of their shopping electronically and inhabit space shuttles on Mars; that they may be able to determine the intelligence of their children; that fifty per cent of the jobs they will hold haven't even been invented yet; and that they will make three to five major career moves in their lifetimes.

Unfortunately, such rapid changes in society are not being accompanied by comparable changes in our educational institutions. The result is all too often an antiquated curricula, a group of teachers and administrators who are unable to reconceptualise their leadership roles and a technology that is altering today's information into tomorrow's misinformation. This condition results in giving students old information rather than the skills they will need now and in the future.

Many are the times that change in schools and teaching have been compared with professions such as medicine and physics to illustrate that education is falling behind the world that it serves. A scientist or a doctor transported into our time from the nineteenth century would find their professions unrecognisable, while a teacher would fit right in. While whiteboards and computers are probably minimal changes in the physical environment, the changes in the people, or the social environment are considerable. Schools are primarily social institutions and there is little doubt that our schools need to reflect and cope with the changes in both our physical and social world.

Hugh McKay in his book *Generations* outlines the social change in attitudes and beliefs through the generations of the 20th century. The Lucky Generation born in the 20's lived through a youth of difficult times – war and depression – while their adult lives were lived in the post-war prosperity. Their values were about trust and loyalty when it was not unusual to start work and retire some forty years later from the same company. Their children – the baby boomers – were young in prosperous times and then faced the difficulties of recession and unemployment. Social values were challenged and changed and their children and their grandchildren now face a very different world.

While every generation faces change, the uncertainty associated with change has affected none so much as the children born in the last quarter of the 20th century. The Options generation, as

Mackay calls them, are those 'who have never expected anything other than instability; who have factored uncertainty into their view of the world; who have assumed from the beginning, that things would change constantly and rapidly'.

This generation and their children make a very different clientele in the classrooms and hallways of our schools. These are children that move in and out of imaginary electronic worlds, who carry mobile phones, are part of an often changing family structure, can readily access global news and information, devour media produced and driven by the values of the United States, have often travelled widely, fear terrorism rather than war and accept and expect medical solutions to illness. They will do jobs that have not yet been invented, be immersed in the knowledge explosion where the non living – computers, robots – and the living world – cloning, gene research – are about to collide, and may be choosing space shuttles and interplanetary travel as a holiday destination.

Changing employment patterns also challenge schools. In 1966 nearly fifty per cent of people were employed in the production industries. Forty years later that number continues to decline to well below half of that number. Numbers in the service industries continue to grow and, along with it, part time and casual employment (ABS).

One hundred years ago the majority students finished their education at year 6 or 8. Fifty years ago a year 10 education was considered adequate. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, education authorities are expecting up to ninety per cent of all students will complete year 12.

Knowledge workers are the new-age factory workers and there is increasing pressure from the business sector for schools to better meet their needs in providing a labour force adept at communication, at handling knowledge technology and at adapting to change. Mark Latham in his book *Civilising Global Capital* argues that 'In the Information Age, the public sector needs to invest in the enhancement of knowledge no less fully than the Industrial Age invested in machines'.

Schools are the starting point in that investment and that factor along with the social changes mean that schools, now more than ever must respond. Too many educators view the world from an extremely narrow and limited perspective … their own individual classroom, year level or school site. Rarely do these public school servants get outside of their own cocoons to see how the rest of the world lives. Interacting with local business people, politicians, taxpayers and entrepreneurs is critical if educators are to really understand change and the responsibilities or challenges that go with it.

Teachers need to take a proactive role in dealing with change rather than the traditional reactive role which has been the educational norm to date. *Taking Charge of Change* by Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin and Hall (1987) outlines a process for effective understanding and handling of change by school personnel. Their conclusions, which have clear implications for educators, were summarised as follows:

> 1) **Change is a process, not an event.** One of the most persistent tendencies of those who do not appreciate the complexities of change is to equate change with handing over a new program, which is an event. This, in fact, was the false tenet on which school improvement was based in the past. We now know that change is a process occurring over time, usually a period of several years. Recognition of this is an essential
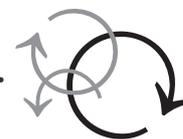
prerequisite of successful implementation of change.

2) Change is accomplished by individuals. A common notion in considering change is to think about it in ambiguous, impersonal terms. But change affects people and their role in the process is of utmost importance. Therefore, individuals must be the focus of attention in implementing a new program. Only when each (or almost each) individual in the school has absorbed the improved practice can we say that the school has changed.

3) Change is a highly personal experience. What we mean here is that individuals are different; people do not behave collectively. Each individual reacts differently to a change and sufficient account of these differences must be taken. Some people will assimilate a new practice much more rapidly than others; some will engage in that process more readily than others. Change will be most successful when its support is geared to the diagnosed needs of the individual users. If change is highly personal, then clearly different responses and interventions will be required for different individuals. Paying attention to each individual's progress can enhance the improvement process.

4) Change involves developmental growth. We have discovered from studies of change that the individuals involved appear to express or demonstrate growth in terms of their feelings and skills. These feelings and skills tend to shift with respect to the new program or practice as individuals pass through an ever-greater degree of experience.

5) Change is best understood in operational terms. Teachers and others, will naturally relate to change or improvement in terms of what it will mean to them or how it will affect their current classroom practice. What changes in their own or their students' values, beliefs and behaviour will it require? How much preparation time will it demand? By addressing these and other questions in concrete, practical terms, facilitators can communicate more relevantly and reduce resistance to improvement efforts.

6) The focus of facilitation should be on individuals, innovations and the context. We tend to see school improvement in terms of a new curriculum, a new program or package – something concrete that we can hold onto. But in doing so, we forget that books and materials and equipment alone do not make change; only people can make change by altering their behaviour. The real meaning of any change lies in its human, not its material, component. Furthermore, effective change facilitators work with people in an adaptive and systematic way, designing interventions for clients' needs, realising that those needs exist in particular contexts and settings. Functioning in a systematic way recognises that the school as a whole will be affected by whatever is done with respect to even its smallest part. Interventions in one arena may well produce unexpected results in another. Therefore, notions about the speed with which successful school improvement can be accomplished, the specific actions needed to achieve it and even the shape that implemented change will ultimately take may have to be altered along the way (pp.5-6).