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Introduction

T*eaching is an invitational art.* If students are reticent to accept the invitation to learn, it limits their capacity to become more skillful and wiser from learning experiences. You work hard to create the favorable conditions for success in hopes of inspiring learners to engage, examine ideas, and produce works of value—How do you feel about what you are doing? Is it worth your time? You wonder how you can meet students’ needs—What should I teach? Who can I ask for help? What exactly is my approach, and why am I choosing to take it? What are students getting out of this unit? But learning is a voluntary endeavor. You cannot force a student to learn. You can change curricula, materials, and physical spaces, yet engaging students boils down to teaching in ways that are effective for the individual learner.

The tenets and designs we provide in this book embrace fresh opportunities. *Questing* is an instructional framework that helps teachers create powerful invitations to all learners through a series of choices. Author Seth Godin (2010) contends that there are really only two things teachers need to teach in school: “how to lead” and “how to solve interesting problems” (p. 61). *Questing* helps address both by embodying a long, arduous search for something that matters to a learner: the hunt for a vaccine, the hope of life on other planets, the pursuit of world peace, the uncovering of what really happened in history. These experiences can result in student-created and teacher-observed evidence that students have met specific learning goals. It is a journey that primarily students lead. Students determine what they consider worth pursuing and, with a teacher’s guidance, how they will pursue it.

A quest begins when teachers invite students into this mindset, revealing learning as it unfolds, versus once when they administer an assessment. What students discover and how they engage are as important as the end product. This approach prepares learners for an unpredictable 21st century world filled with messy, complex problems that often

require skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and innovation along with dispositions such as listening with understanding, having empathy, and striving for accuracy.

The questing framework provides access to two elements that we believe are missing in much of learning: joy and community. It is possible to make joy a primary consideration when designing instruction, and you can facilitate it many ways—providing time and space to pursue something fascinating, introducing the struggle of figuring out something elusive, or recognizing progress, for instance. Sometimes that joy comes from being part of a community. Learners use questing to build or make themselves part of a sincere community of others—networks—who develop ideas, solve problems, and share approaches to benefit that space’s members. With aspects of the questing framework, which we help you dive deeply into, the focus is as much on the *experience* as it is on the *learning*. The challenge for teachers is both guiding the process as an invitation and documenting the experience effectively. This is where *The Quest for Learning* comes in.

After the following section discerns questing from other instructional models and frameworks, we will introduce questing and its components and provide an overview of what is in this book.

Discern Questing From Other Instructional Models and Frameworks

The appetite for an instructional *model* satisfies a craving for something tangible to guide instruction with a linear (or near linear) flow of steps, protocols, and tools. An instructional *framework*, which is what questing offers, does not do this; instead, it clearly defines the elements or choices and then uses those elements or choices consistently as the foundation for future models. Questing naturally nests within the instructional model of personalized learning. Allison Zmuda, Greg Curtis, and Diane Ullman (2015) define *personalized learning* as “a progressively student-driven model in which students deeply engage in meaningful, authentic, and rigorous challenges to demonstrate desired outcomes” (p. 7). Questing is very much in line with personalized learning’s purposeful choices about when the teacher takes the lead, when teachers and students co-create, and when students take the lead. Bena Kallick and Allison Zmuda (2017b) explain that the “teacher can turn the volume up or down, amplifying or reducing the amount of student agency as the teacher and students begin to feel more comfortable with student self-direction” (p. 54). Exhibiting this responsiveness and allowing this range are vital as you balance alignment with content standards, exposure to new ideas and ways of thinking, and identified areas for individual student growth.

Three learning models or frameworks may appear similar to questing—(1) individualization, (2) differentiation, and (3) project-based learning—because in them, students have increased control over certain aspects of their learning. *Individualization*, a student-centered

framework, helps students own the pace of their learning as they tackle content-related problems. They can move at their own pace through a series of topics and demonstrate mastery when they're ready. The teacher manages the learning by helping establish and monitor timelines, offering consultations when needed, and evaluating performance in light of desired results. However, individualization limits students' control over what problems, questions, and challenges they tackle. In addition, students may not interact much with others. The goal may be more focused on completing a topic than engaging in robust learning experiences.

Differentiation allows students' content, process, or product choices, but within the confines of what the teacher offers (which he or she determines based on individual students' readiness, interests, and learning preferences). While offering choice, the learning designs typically are prescribed options or scaffolds that the teacher has vetted for alignment with specific learning goals, preferred ways of working, and scoring methods. The teacher functions as a designer, lead instructor, and evaluator. In addition, the teacher sets the pace and often designs instructional tools (such as centers or stations) to support learners in differentiated ways.

Project-based learning engages students in the pursuit of a worthy, challenging question or problem over an extended period of time. The students are responsible for delivering a public presentation, but unlike quests, the teacher is primarily responsible for forming the essential question and task, even if students contribute to the deliverables' design. After the project's launch, the teacher may facilitate ongoing work while relinquishing some control to students.

Quests are based specifically on what students determine is compelling, with few, if any, restrictions, though not necessarily without guidance. Quests are not necessarily monthlong projects, though they can be. A quest can occur during the process of learning a cell's major components, for example. In addition, collaboration is an integral part of questing. While writing this book, we embraced the nonlinear and often messy reality of defining a framework. We understand the limits of working within a framework, including the inability to guarantee that if you follow certain steps, everything will go according to plan. We also understand the desire for exactly that kind of reassurance. But it simply isn't possible with questing, and we address that as well—such as when talking about unexpected outcomes, for example.

Understand Questing and Its Components

To be sure, questing is not unit or curriculum design. You can employ questing with any unit by paying attention to three engagement tenets. We developed these tenets as a result of the interplay among brain-based research, game-based theory, and lots of learner

observation. What we offer in this book clarifies some of the more challenging choices and elements within the questing framework more deeply.

Our three learner engagement tenets follow.

1. The learner engages with relevant, worthy inquiries and experiences that are interesting or emotionally gripping.
2. The learner engages in an active, intentional cycle with clear goals and right-sized, actionable steps.
3. The learner engages in social, collaborative opportunities that grow expertise.

The student and teacher experience engagement tenets through a design type. Both make deliberate design choices in the questing framework. In this book, we focus on (1) question design, (2) game design, and (3) network design. These are not the only designs through which students can quest, but they are the ones with which most teachers struggle.

Any one quest may include any combination of inquiry, game, *and* network design choices. Student and teacher make choices through these design lenses to grow their own expertise. What is relevant and worth investigating? What is interesting or emotionally gripping? What networks should I tap into?

After initially outlining something based on the quester's interests, student and teacher design and redesign the details as the learning journey begins unfolding. Participants address details in a *just-in-time* manner, as they crop up, instead of in advance. This powerfully summarizes 21st century learning: discovering something of interest, working in a space with like-minded participants, and establishing either group or individual goals. Developing a prototype, pursuing social reform, or creating a film takes weeks, perhaps months, and represents possible products or events from a questing experience. Those weeks are filled with discovery, missteps, and wins both big and little. These are questers engaging in the learning process.

See What This Book Offers

To simply promote an experience and call it a quest does not mean the learner automatically experiences engagement and joyful learning. True questing means teachers encourage problem solvers, creators, and critical thinkers to adapt and grow with content, tools, and resources. To that end, the way a teacher facilitates a quest makes or breaks a student's learning experience.

The Quest for Learning helps you build a repository of instructional techniques and approaches that generate and sustain quality questing experiences. We split this book into two parts. Part I (chapters 1 through 5) is about establishing questing's foundations; part II (chapters 6 through 9) is about guiding quests. Chapter 1 clarifies why questing is a compelling method for boosting student engagement. Chapter 2 thoroughly explores the three tenets of engagement and introduces three design lenses. Subsequent chapters

dig deeply into each design type as a collection of choices to be made while questing—chapter 3 digs deeper into question design choices, chapter 4 into game design choices, and chapter 5 into network design choices.

Part II puts the components together and shows you how to act on the information. This portion of the book asks that readers follow the sequence it gives. Chapter 6 reveals quest inspiration, goal clarification, curriculum mapping, and final products (known as *deliverables*). Chapter 7 helps you introduce students to questing. Chapter 8 details support provision during journeys, starting with timelines and checklists, which help address the standards required of you. Chapter 9 helps teachers and students decide what deliverables students will generate. Each chapter concludes with a coda to wrap up the most salient points therein. Afterward, appendix A addresses frequently asked *questions*, and appendix B offers probing questions that help guide quest decisions.

To showcase how the big picture and fine details support one another in quests, we've chosen one illustrative quest example (on the topic of disease) to show how the details within each chapter add dimension and engagement. Our self-imposed criteria for selecting the topic follow.

- * The topic is applicable for students in various age ranges.
- * Students can pursue the topic through myriad courses and subjects.
- * The problem, challenge, or idea is meaningful and worth the pursuit.

This book helps you use the questing framework in your classroom and incorporate learning standards. It also provides planning and assessment tools. (Visit go.hbe.com.au to download free reproducibles, including an example of the completed disease quest.)

We sincerely hope that you get the following from this book.

- * Inspiration to use questing as a framework in your own classroom
- * Opportunities to seek increased co-creation, win states, affinity spaces, and authentic deliverables
- * Additional tools for your instructional toolbox (including question design options, game design options, and network design options)
- * Tenets of engagement participation options for all students

Pause for a moment to respond to the following questions: What do you want on behalf of your learners? How do you model that, live that, and grow in that space together with your students? This response is a quest's start and guiding reason. We designed this reading experience to examine current realities and grow from them through questioning, imagining, and—most important—taking action. Learning often requires a timeless and courageous act of becoming. This book is the beginning of a conversation. Let's get started.