



# Just for the ASKing!

by Bruce Oliver

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## On Second Thought



Bruce facilitating the **Leading the Learning**® workshop

The *Just for the ASKing!* online library contains over 100 copyright-free issues. Although I am always hopeful that our e-newsletter subscribers find the time to read each issue, I am also a realist. I know that although readers have good intentions, they simply get busy and do not get around to reading them right away. Given that, I decided to title this month's issue **On Second Thought** and devote it to shining a light on selected newsletters in the *Just for the ASKing!* library with the hope that you will either revisit, or read for the first time, one or more of the selected newsletters.

The selected newsletter issues come from these areas of focus:

- Instructional Leadership
- Creating a Culture for Learning
- Best Practice in Instruction
- Making Assessment a Learning Experience
- Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners
- Motivational/Thought Provoking

Access all 100 issues at [www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/just-for-the-asking/jfta-library/](http://www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/just-for-the-asking/jfta-library/)

### When Students Don't Learn

This issue includes successful initiatives that schools are employing to promote student learning. In addition, it also includes dozens of practitioner examples that can be employed before or after assessments, or at any time during instruction to help struggling learners.

### Growth-Producing Feedback

Although this issue was published several years ago, it has as much relevance today as it did then. In a recent article, New Zealand-born and now professor at the University of Melbourne John Hattie points out that although teachers report that they provide feedback to students, classroom observers see very little teacher-to-student feedback, and students say that they receive very little feedback from their teachers. As Hattie stresses, effective feedback can double the rate of learning and is one of his top ten influences on achievement. This *Just for the ASKing!* newsletter supports Hattie's views and will help teachers provide feedback effectively and consistently.

### Don't Jump to Conclusions

All teachers want their students to succeed. However, some students do not achieve for a variety of reasons. As we grapple to find reasons why some students seem reluctant or resistant to our efforts, we can reach conclusions that may not tell the whole story. This issue goes below the surface and provides some alternate explanations as to why students are not responsive.

## **Formative Assessment FAQs**

Formative assessment is a topic being addressed by many educational writers and researchers. It is also a concept that is misunderstood by many practitioners. Researchers Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam recently published an extensive review of assessment practices and concluded that when properly used, formative assessment data can have a profound and powerful impact on student achievement. This issue clarifies what formative assessment is and how it can best be used.

## **Closing the Achievement Gap**

Each of the tips in the PDF attachment to this issue entitled **Top Ten Tips for Closing the Achievement Gap** could be the focus of a separate faculty or team meeting discussion. This issue is easily one of the more popular tools in our workshops because it pulls so many important components together and is so practical in nature.

## **Resistant and Reluctant Learners**

A question that continues to come up is: “What do I do when students refuse to work or participate?” The question represents some of the greatest frustrations teachers face as they work with young people. Although there are no answers that work for all students, this issue presents ideas shared by teachers as well as some personal insights. It also includes an excerpt from Paula Rutherford’s book *Why Didn’t I Learn This in College?* entitled **Dealing with Unmet Expectations**.

## **Success Factors in Diverse Schools**

Schools across our country are becoming more and more diverse every day. Some schools, which have traditionally had a homogeneous population, are suddenly facing new challenges. This issue takes an in-depth look at ten beliefs and practices that have enabled some schools to be more successful in reaching their changing populations.

## **CSI: Classroom Success Investigation**

All teachers want each and every lesson to run smoothly and show clear evidence of student learning, however, that is not always the case. Some educators view unsuccessful lessons as opportunities to diagnose their practice and make adjustments so that future lessons run more smoothly. This issue provides ten practices that can result in more favorable outcomes.

## **Making 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Come Alive!**

With the advent of the Common Core or other revised and more rigorous standards, today’s teachers are expected to include in their planning new concepts and new ways of thinking that are in line with the skills students need to be college or career ready. This issue tackles the topic by contrasting some traditional educational practices with alternative ways of thinking and planning that are more in sync with today’s standards.

## **Engaging Experiences**

There is probably no more important factor that can impact learning than student engagement – or the lack of it. This issue includes over 75 options for teachers to consider as they work to keep students meaningfully engaged in rigorous and relevant tasks. Categories include planning units and lessons, building relationships, establishing a learner-centered environment, productive class discussions, setting students up for success, and assessing student learning. As always, we must go beyond asking “Are the students on task?” and also ask “Is the task worth doing?”

## **We Hold These Truths**

Sometimes we get so caught up in the details of our work that we do not take the time to step back from our day-to-day routines to ask ourselves, “Why am I doing this?” As professionals, we should take the time to stop and think about the tenets or principles that are the underpinning for the hard work that we do. This issue puts

forth a series of “truths” that I value; readers are encouraged to explore the personal beliefs that drive their own instructional decisions.

### **In the Minds and Hearts of Children**

We may never know what really is going on inside our learners’ heads. They don’t always say what they are thinking or feeling; and yet, in their quiet reflective moments, they truly do appreciate the hard work we do. This issue attempts to capture some of the emotions they may have locked inside. When we consider these emotions, our perceptions may well change.

An alternate title for this month’s newsletter is **The Sturdy Dozen** because it features twelve issues from the **Just for the ASKing!** library. Synonyms for the word “sturdy” include robust, powerful, resilient, solid, and dependable; all of these adjectives describe the content of these selected issues.

It is our hope that you will find other titles in the library that you may have inadvertently overlooked or may now provide much-needed insight, an answer to a problem, or a solution to a burning question. If you would like to discuss how you could use one or more of these issues in your role as an instructional leader at the district, school, team, or classroom level, please contact me at [bruce\\_oliver@justaskpublications.com](mailto:bruce_oliver@justaskpublications.com).

### **Resources and References**

Access a list of Dylan Williams’ publications at [www.dylanwilliam.org/Dylan\\_Williams\\_website/Publications.html](http://www.dylanwilliam.org/Dylan_Williams_website/Publications.html)

Access a list of John Hattie’s publications at <http://visible-learning.org/category/books/books-in-english/>

Access the library of **Just for the ASKing!** at [www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/just-for-the-asking/jfta-library/](http://www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/just-for-the-asking/jfta-library/)

Access the library of **Making the Common Core Come Alive!** at [www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/mccca/mccca-library/](http://www.justaskpublications.com/just-ask-resource-center/e-newsletters/mccca/mccca-library/)

Rutherford, Paula. **Active Learning and Engagement Strategies**. Alexandria, VA: Just ASK Publications, 2012.

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