
Introduction

What you have at your fingertips is a compilation of chapters written by individuals who not only know the theory and research in their various fields of expertise, but also know teaching *and* teachers. They are in classrooms across the nation, learning and adding to our knowledge of what really works—and unfortunately what does not work—with students today. There are so many experts nationally and internationally who write about and study different areas of education. What was important to us as we invited authors to write for this book is that they provide us with work that is timely, practical, to the point, and written so that you would want to pick it up and use it time and time again. We asked authors to talk to you, not to preach or write as if this were a research journal. We wanted humor and realism throughout the best practices and substantive content. And we think we got it!

You may notice that there are some areas of redundancy. For example, many authors ask teachers to stop talking so much, to give students more choice, to individualize and differentiate, and to connect with parents. Rather than pulling these items out, we left them to help emphasize and highlight tips that experts from differing frames of reference share. On the other hand, you might notice some discrepancies among chapters. While person first language (e.g., “the boy with the learning disability” as opposed to the “learning disabled boy”) is important for many of the authors (and honestly, for us as the editors), we respected the fact that fields such as Deaf education and Gifted education don’t use person-first language and instead refer to the Deaf child or the gifted student. We left those also to depict the variety in the field.

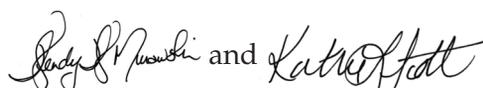
How do you use this book? That’s up to you. You can read it from beginning to end or you can pick and choose. We organized it so that our content areas are first, followed by instructional strategies and pedagogy. In the third section, we include information on special populations. While some chapters may be more or less relevant to you and your teaching, we hope you consider reading them all. You may be surprised what you pick up in a chapter on working with English language learners, even if you haven’t yet had any of those students in your class yet!

2 What Really Works in Elementary Education

We'd also like to point out that we have interspersed quite a few "Making Connections" boxes throughout the chapters. This is so you can see how all of these chapters interrelate and support one another. If you want, you can make this a "Choose-Your-Own-Adventure" book and follow the Making Connections boxes throughout the text! Want to keep learning? We certainly hope you do. If so, please look at the plethora of references our authors have included and cited from. In many cases, we also provide a "Recommended Readings" section but be aware, if an item was cited in the References section, it is not in the Recommended Readings section as well. We hope you will know the author recommends it by the fact that it was important enough to reference.

We must thank each and every one of our authors for their hard work on this book. When we approached them and said, "We want you to write a practical chapter on your topic, but please keep it mainly focused on bulleting the Do's and Don'ts . . . oh right, and keep it really short," we had mixed responses. Some replied, "Heck yeah! I could do that in my sleep," while others said, "Just a few pages? On this huge topic? Are you crazy?" But they all took up the challenge and came through! They, like us, felt this book was important enough to get out there. They, like us, knew that teachers are busy and are understandably looking for something short and sweet that boils down the key information in a quick to grab format. They, like us, are passionate about education and improving what we are doing for all kids. All of them. So we thank our authors. (And yes, we owe you all a drink!)

We must also thank the Eisner Foundation for creating and supporting the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). Their vision of ongoing professional development for urban education has enabled us to create this book in the first place. Our Dean at the CSUN Michael D. Eisner College of Education, Dr. Michael Spagna, also continues to constantly encourage us to pursue cutting edge practices in education and to remain the professional development and research hub of the college. We would like to make a "shout out" to Rick Goldman, Marcia Rea, and Amy Sheldon, who were with the CTL when we first conceptualized "What Really Works"—we hope you three are proud of where we've come! Last, but never ever least, we both would like to thank our CTL student assistants, Ashot Nikoyan and Timothy Nang, for their incredible support as we worked diligently on this text (while trying to concurrently run about 17 other projects and events). Special thanks to CTL student assistant Sam Garley, for providing indispensable behind-the-scenes help. You three are amazing, and we are grateful you have joined our CTL family.

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