

# GOOD YEAR BOOKS

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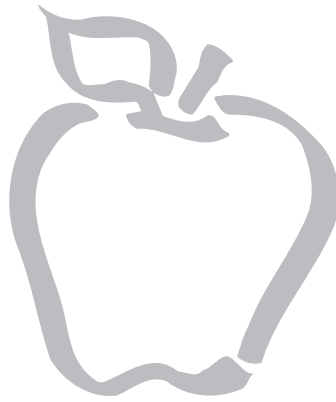
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# New Teacher's Handbook

**What All New Teachers  
Need to Know**



**Gary M. Garfield**

 GOOD YEAR BOOKS

## **Dedication and Acknowledgments**

A special thank you to the teachers who have shared their ideas and ideals with me over the years, and to those who continue to make a difference in the lives they touch.

To my students who enter this worthy profession full of caring, passion, and love.

Thank you to Pam, Andrea, and Marissa

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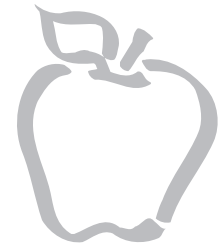
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# Culture of the School

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*Will I fit in?*



The school in which you are now an integral part should be a place of openness, sharing, and caring. Your classroom should also be a focal point for what is new and good in education, a place of renewed energy and hope as well as an arena to model new ideas. *Be personally open to new ideas, seek resources from your colleagues, and share whatever you learn, however you learn it.* You will find many knowledgeable professionals at your school who can offer you practical, quality ideas for greater teaching effectiveness. Seek these people out, ask them for help, and offer the same in return. It is then that you will be able to sort through all of the well-meaning ideas, time-savers, activities, and procedures, picking and choosing those that seem to be consistent with what you wish to accomplish. Borrowing and sharing creates a climate for positive change.

## **Helpful and Not-so-helpful Faculty**

As a new teacher, you will be offered advice, assistance, and loving care from those faculty members who really want to help. Most of the time they are sincere. Your colleagues have a

wealth of ideas and experience and it is yours for the asking. When they invite you to their classrooms, look around, absorb as much as you can, and compliment them by asking if it is all right to borrow some of their ideas. Everyone will benefit. With some luck, your colleagues will also share what is in their cupboards and drawers.

◆ *Playing it safe by teaching from the book, and handing out lots of worksheets is dangerous to you and to the educational health of the children.*

In other instances, you may feel unwelcome, or experience a condescending tone. Don't take it to heart. For some teachers, you are a reflection of the time when they were beginning teachers and full of enthusiasm. What they now see is where they are today, and some don't like what they see. So, rather than admit how they have changed, these teachers choose instead to denigrate the beginning teachers. Don't fall prey to negative remarks and certainly don't agree with anything negative that teachers may say. You can smile and keep on doing what you think is right and good for your children.

Playing it safe by teaching from the book, and handing out lots of worksheets is dangerous to you and to the educational health of the children. During this first year, take some risks. Try new delivery systems with your curriculum, have your students participate in projects that are exciting and, if your district permits it and you want to, call the media to report projects to the community—do something related to social action to make a difference. You and your children will be rewarded again and again year after year. You don't want to be the same as every other teacher at every other school, and neither do your students. It's just like taking a magic carpet ride, and you're right up in front.

## The Lunchroom

It's your first day teaching, and the primary teachers have lunch at 11:15. Where should you sit? Who do you sit with? What is the right thing to say? On that first day, ask one of your grade-level colleagues if you can walk to the lunchroom together. That solves that problem. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

◆ *You are being called to the front of the class to be an effective teacher, one who will change lives.*

Come Friday, it may be "Treat Day," and this is when the cakes and cookies and other goodies are loaded on the table and the feast begins. Volunteer to be on one of the first Friday Treat teams and make one of your best. You'll be an instant hero or heroine, and membership in the "club" is assured. Don't buy a dozen donuts and fling them down on the table. At the very least, bake some brownies and sprinkle some powdered sugar over the top.

As for being in the "club," acceptance means the right to say whatever you want. This comes after at least a few months of being a teacher. As a beginning teacher, if you become known as the "loud know-it-all," your membership will be delayed, if not outright withheld. Be a part of the group, participate, enjoy your colleagues, contribute, but don't act like you own the place. Be just a bit humble those first weeks.

*Talking about students in the lunchroom is a bad practice for several reasons.* First, talking negatively about children hurts them, perpetuates a self-fulfilling prophecy, and makes the teacher appear less than sensitive. Jokes about children are mean-spirited and inappropriate, and no child should be the source of negative amusement for the faculty. Another concern is that nonteacher personnel or volunteer parents may overhear the conversation. The negative comments you make may not remain restricted to the teachers' sanctuary.

*Participate in the lunchroom ritual at least a few times a week.* Although you may have a great deal of planning and other classroom chores to accomplish during that forty-minute



lunch reprieve, spend some of that time with your colleagues interacting, sharing who you are, and simply being social. It's fun, and you may need a "mind break" as well.

### **I'll Do It!—Volunteering**

At the first faculty meeting, or before, you will be asked to sign up for a variety of school committees: social, library, (a very important committee), special task force, curriculum, and a host of other committees related to almost every subject area and school life. Volunteer! *Here is a great opportunity to become involved in decision making at the school.* It's also an

excellent opportunity to meet and work with your colleagues, learn about the workings of the school, and, of course, have an immediate influence on the affairs that impact students, teachers, and the community. In addition, your willingness to volunteer serves as a positive showcase for your collegiality, cooperation, commitment, and leadership.

**A Cautionary Note:** Be sure that in your eagerness to participate, you keep in mind the extra work that committees entail. Try not to overcommit so that you can allocate sufficient time for your preparation and teaching responsibilities.



# Organization and Planning Before the Doors Open

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*How can my classroom become a place of energy, excitement, and community?*



## **This is Your Classroom**

After you accept your position, the principal or administrative designee walks you to your new room, unlocks the door, and ushers you into a vast, lifeless container. This is a traditional classroom. However, more and more new teachers are finding themselves (at least for the first year) in less-than-traditional classroom spaces. You may be ushered into the foyer of the auditorium or a corner of the cafeteria. You could be assigned to the library or a large storage room. Your guide will say, “Well, this is your classroom.” Just smile and say, “Oh great, this is nice. I can do it.”

With class reductions in many states, classrooms are in short supply and teachers and students are making do with what they have. You will have to view this as a temporary adventure and design your instructional area based on what you want to happen, and, of course, considering the traffic flow or the

height of the stage! *Whatever happens, maintain a good attitude and demonstrate that you have what it takes.* This inconvenience shall pass, and someday it will be a great story.

## **Setting Up the Room**

No matter where it is, your classroom is the place where you will spend many of your waking hours. It is the place where you and your students will live and learn five days a week, ten months a year. It is important that it be a place that is good for *both* of you.

Look at the room as a place that reflects your philosophy and teaching style and think about how that translates to working with children. For example, you may be a child-centered teacher or you may be teacher-directed. You may be an advocate of cooperative learning or of the practice of inquiry. You may be a

fundamentalist. *Your classroom should reflect your teaching philosophies.*

When visitors step into a classroom, they can look at the faces of the children and have an immediate barometer as to the emotional climate. They can “feel” the place and the energy, or lack thereof, as they scan the room with their eyes. When the environment is good, it is so good! When it is lacking, it doesn’t *feel* good to the students or the teacher.

Some of what you do in your classroom can be decided before the children arrive. Other parts of the environment you can encourage your students to create. For example, prior to the beginning of school, you can organize bulletin boards that may have a generic base, such as a calendar, job chart, list of classroom management procedures, schedule, and motivation boards for different subject areas. After the first day (see “The first day” and “The first week”), you can gradually post students’ ideas, work in progress, writing, artwork, science, and so on. If your students are interested in roller-blading, swimming, or soccer, you might have posters or photos related to these topics. Take photographs of your students working and post them in an attractive display. Suddenly, your classroom will be alive with the color and excitement of the real world. It will become a place where children want to be, feel comfortable, and excel.

*The classroom is a vehicle for you to accomplish your objectives.* If social interaction, cooperative learning, or group decision-making is one of your objectives, it will be reflected in the organization of the physical environment. If your students are going to work independently, using computers or other classroom resources,

your classroom might take on another look. Some samples of various classroom setups are shown in the charts on pages 115–117.

If you are a teacher who presents or directs, minimizes social interaction, and maximizes structured academic assignments, you may feel more comfortable in another type of setup.

◆ *Look at the room as a place that reflects your philosophy and teaching style and think about how that translates to working with children.*

You can design an environment that intuitively feels right. If the classroom setup doesn’t work, rearrange it and try another model. Remember that classrooms, like children, grow, evolve, and change. As a new teacher, it helps to be flexible and to allow the classroom environment to adjust to these normal and interesting changes.

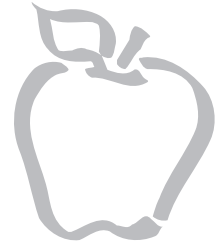
**Note:** The classroom designs provided in this handbook are suggestions to assist the beginning teacher. If you have your own idea or a room layout that makes sense, by all means implement it. You’ll know quickly enough whether it is successful.



# Lessons and Units: The Essentials of Planning

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*How will I be able to plan effective lessons and units?*



## **Making Teaching and Learning Memorable**

Our memories of elementary school are often the most accurate indicators of its success. For many years, I have asked new classes of teacher candidates, conference attendees, and workshop participants to candidly recount a particularly positive and memorable learning episode or lesson that occurred in their early school years. Only five to ten percent were able to recall one positive learning episode. That means that a startling 90 to 95 percent of the group can't remember a great instructional activity that occurred during grade school. Three of those who could recall such a memorable event responded with the following comments:

- ◆ *I remember that we learned about the pioneers, read stories, dressed in costume, and acted out what life on the prairie must have been like.*
- ◆ *I recall making a relief map out of salt, water, and flour.*

- ◆ *Two of us assembled a California mission and a miniature Native American village. I can still remember the research we did.*

Others talk about their vivid memories of skits, cooking, dancing, singing, or painting as a part of an integrated curriculum. These students can often recall what they were wearing, the color of their shoes, the fragrances in the classroom, and other details associated with the event, even when it may have occurred some fifteen to twenty years earlier.

What is the common element of all of these remembered experiences? Simply stated, all of these activities were experiential or “hands-on,” multimodal learning. Such learning engages the student, utilizing visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning modalities. We all learn through these modalities. Thus, the type of memorable learning episodes so clearly described by students nearly always possesses these multimodal characteristics.

I have never heard a student say, “That was really an exciting social studies worksheet,” or “I remember these really great questions that came at the end of the chapter.”

For the beginning teacher, the message is clear. *What you do in your instruction must engage the students and should appeal to the learning modalities of each learner.* It should be exciting! If you accomplish this both in the planning of your lesson content and through active instruction, you will give your students a strong basis from which to develop.

## Thematic, Integrated Curriculum

Thematic teaching is a powerful tool for engaging and exciting your students about learning.

What is thematic teaching? Simply put, it is the organization of subject areas around a central curriculum theme. Can we teach everything we need in this fashion? Probably not, but it is a wonderful vehicle for connecting the disciplines in a way that makes sense and has lasting impact. For example, when we study westward expansion, the first thing that often comes to mind is the vision of a Conestoga wagon rolling along the dry prairie. With this image, we remember a few dates and events, but little else.

Thematic teaching brings a rich combination of social studies, science, art, music, literature, and even math to the study of westward expansion. The learner who has experienced westward expansion thematically will see the prairie schooner, hear the music of the many cultures of the American West, construct quilts, sand paint, identify plants used for food, read journals, engage in literature, myths, and legends, and explore the geography of the region. Students will experience the tapestry of the many aspects of life as though they were travelling west in

the mid-1850s. Learning becomes a personal, engaging, and memorable event.

## Planning for Effective Teaching and Learning

Why do teachers plan? Effective teachers plan because this is the best way to maximize the time and energy used in the classroom. As a teacher, you have a finite number of hours in the instructional day, week, and year, so it becomes of paramount importance to enhance students’ experience and learning.

What are the elements of an effective lesson? You, as the teacher, determine the objectives for the lesson based on your students’ needs and the required standards and/or curriculum. You allocate time, materials, and labor to the task. You implement specific procedures to accomplish the stated objectives. You check many times throughout the lesson for understanding and application and make modifications and/or adjustments as you move along. When the lesson is complete, you look back to ensure that the objectives have been met and student learning has occurred.

*Effective lesson planning is not a mystery and is not difficult to successfully implement.* If you

