

Preface

What is a complete education? This is a critical question that educators at all levels should ask themselves. It is a question that we need to be asking regularly, because the world of the 21st century is constantly changing.

I view a complete, effective education as having two major components. The first is the *acculturation of an individual*, which involves passing on the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of our society to the next generation. Students begin by learning basic skills, such as reading, so they can explore the wealth of material that documents all human endeavors. The following are elements of a complete education:

- An understanding of history and an appreciation for geography, local as well as global
- Exposure to the languages, customs, and beliefs of other cultures around the world
- An understanding of how government functions at the local, state/province, and federal levels
- A knowledge of the scientific principles of life
- An understanding of the environment and how to care for it
- Skill in mathematical calculation
- The ability to express one's ideas clearly in written and spoken form
- Reading material for reflection and personal enjoyment, including various kinds of literature and poetry
- Exposure to the creative expression of ideas through the visual and performing arts
- Knowledge of how to take care of the body to gain an appreciation for the concepts of healthy living and lifelong physical activity

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This content has been the focus of traditional education, and I believe it is still vitally important that we continue to pass on this knowledge in educating the youth of the 21st century. Exposing students to the accumulated wisdom gathered from all human experience richly equips them to become informed, thoughtful citizens able to process the complexities of modern life.

However, acculturation is not the only essential component of a complete education. Of equal importance is the *acquisition of practical problem-solving skills*, which will enable students to successfully apply their learning to real-life situations in the workplace and in their personal lives. To become contributing members of the economy, students need the following:

- An understanding of how business operates
- An awareness of the various roles of workers within an organization
- A knowledge of how to perform the basic tasks of running a company
- Skill in solving real-world problems

The public school system has not done a good job of addressing this second essential component of a complete education. We face a growing problem of the gap between the practical skills students need to succeed in the modern world and those that are actually being taught in school. Consequently, there is increasing pressure on teachers to do a better job of teaching these practical skills.

That brings us face to face with a major issue in education today. Teachers are already overtaxed with all the demands placed upon them; to now say that teachers need to do more to equip students with the practical problem-solving skills needed for the working world will not be greeted warmly by those in the classroom. Is there any way we can combine these two major components of a complete education and kill two birds with one stone? Yes. That is what this book is about—restructuring instruction so that traditional content in all subject areas can be delivered in such a way that students develop the practical problem-solving skills they need.