

# Preface

## WHY A BOOK ON FLIPPED CLASSROOMS?

Over the past 25 years, I've written a lot about educational technologies and school change, but I never heard the term "flipping the classroom" until I attended the Intel Schools of Distinction awards dinner in the fall of 2011. I was seated at a table with a group of amazing educators from Byron Independent School District #531 in northeastern Minnesota. Their high school was nominated for an Intel award based on the changes they had made to their math curriculum. The teachers enthusiastically shared with me the story of how, when there was no money to buy new textbooks, they decided to create their own curriculum, delivering math lessons using an interactive whiteboard and posting them on YouTube for students to watch at night, then using their class time to work with students as they tackled the math problems raised in the lessons they had viewed the night before.

This, I learned, was called "flipping the classroom." I was captivated by their story and totally charmed by their passion for what they were doing. When the announcement was made that Byron won the high school mathematics award for 2011 Intel School of Distinction, I leapt to my feet and cheered alongside them!

Following the awards ceremony, I suggested to Wendy Shannon, then superintendent of the district, that I'd be honored to write an article about the Byron story. She loved the idea! Thus began my explorations into the world of flipped

classrooms. Since that time I have visited, interviewed, and explored the work of teachers who were flipping in a variety of settings: urban and rural, public and private, elementary, middle, and high school. What strikes me about all of these educators is their creativity, enthusiasm, and willingness to share what they are learning with others. I saw how flipped teaching opens the door of the classroom and lets teachers showcase what they do, explore what is working and question what is not, and learn from one another. These teachers are my inspiration; it was they who motivated me to write this book.

## HOW THIS BOOK IS DIFFERENT

This book is not intended as a sales pitch for flipping or the products teachers use to support the practice. It offers a balanced picture of flipping from a variety of perspectives—those of teachers, administrators, and researchers as well as students and their parents. Although my tone is generally positive, I end each chapter with a series of caveats to provide reminders of the potential downsides and unintended consequences, positive and negative, that can accompany educational and technological innovations.

Nor is this book intended to serve as a “how to” book. There are a number of other excellent books, videos, blogs, websites, and other resources that give detailed guidance in the technical details of flipping classrooms. These are best written by teachers themselves, drawing on their classroom experience and knowledge of emerging technologies and capabilities. I reference some of these in the book chapters, as well as in the Q & A in the appendix.

Finally, this book is not a series of case studies selected to show “the best of flipping.” Rather, I use teachers’ stories and words as snapshots, selected to illustrate key points and various ways teachers are flipping across the curriculum and at various grade levels.

My goal in *Time for Learning: Top 10 Reasons Why Flipping the Classroom Can Change Education* is to explore ideas and

analyses beyond what current publications have to offer. I portray flipping in the context of school change over time, especially changes driven by technology. I also explore the implications for powerful new approaches to teaching based on research on cognition, pedagogy, and learning theory. This book also offers a nuanced view and analysis of potential impacts on teachers (their roles, deployment, and work in teams rather than as sole artisans), and about implications for policy. The focus is on K–12 schools and schooling, but examples from higher education are included where they offer useful insights.

## WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM THIS BOOK?

This book is aimed at several audiences. For those **teachers already flipping the classroom**, I hope this book resonates with what you are doing and why. In the midst of a revolution, it can be useful to step back and see how what you are doing fits into the larger picture. I know you are always eager to get your hands on any and all information about the field, one in which you take great interest and justifiable pride as early adopters. You will be the ones to let me know if I got the story right, and I welcome your comments!

Beyond these trailblazing advocates, however, my primary audience **is traditional educators at all levels** who have heard the buzz about flipped classrooms and are curious to learn more. Whether you are a classroom teacher, resource teacher, teacher candidate or teacher educator, or a principal or school administrator, this book will provide the overview you need to know about flipped teaching and considerations to keep in mind if you plan to adopt it for your school or classroom.

- **Teachers** will read it from the perspective of improving practice and engaging students.
- **Principals** will find value in the discussion of remodeling education and using educational resources differently.

- **Superintendents** will find this an important reference as they provide leadership that promotes school change, or are asked to support innovation driven from the bottom up by their teachers.

In addition, education policy makers at all levels can gain from reading this book:

- **School board members** seeking to keep abreast of educational innovations
- **Legislators and staffers at the state or national level** considering the implications of flipped classrooms and the policies that can support or (impede) their effectiveness

Others I hope find value in the book include the following:

- **Researchers** investigating the impacts of flipping and approaches most conducive to success
- **International educators** seeking to learn from innovative practices in U.S. schools
- And, importantly, **parents, the media, and members of the general public** who wish to stay informed of important trends impacting today's students

I hope this book encourages all readers to consider new possibilities—to flip your mindset—as together we reimagine and refine ways to harness our most powerful assets—great teachers, curious students, and powerful tools—to expand the time for learning for all students.