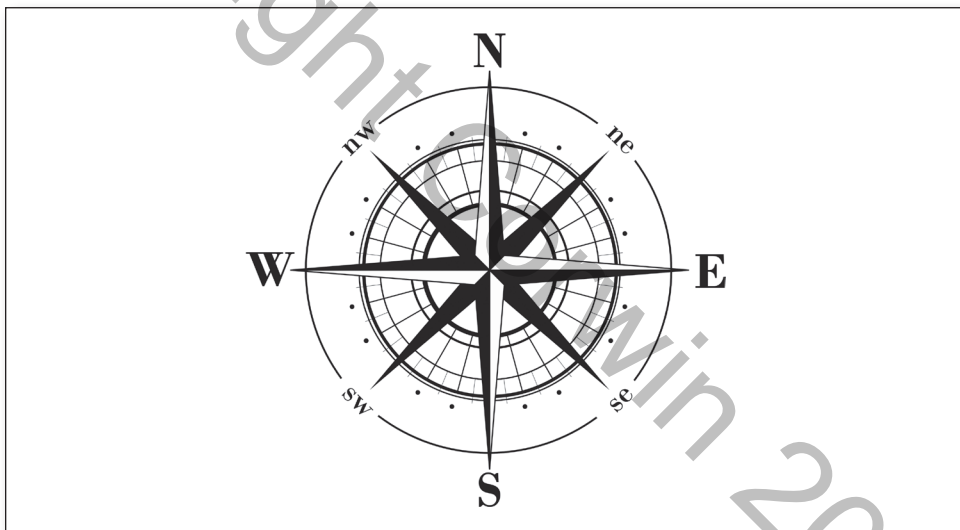

Introduction: Finding True North

A Compass for Teaching and Learning



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True North is the internal compass that guides you successfully through life. It represents who you are as a human being at your deepest level. It is your orienting point—your fixed point in a spinning world—that helps you stay on track as a leader. Your True North is based on what is most important to you, your most cherished values, your passions and motivations, the sources of satisfaction in your life.

—Bill George and Peter Sims, *True North:
Discover Your Authentic Leadership*

As the leaders of the classroom, teachers are charged with tremendous responsibility to guide and educate students each and every year. Ask any accomplished and dedicated teacher why he or she teaches, and you will hear statements such as, “It’s seeing the light bulb turn on,” or “It’s sharing my love of learning,” or “I get to touch the lives of kids and make a difference so they can make a difference in this world!” These declarations expose the **Teacher’s Internal Compass**—their passions and motivations that underpin core beliefs and values. Teaching is their calling in life.

While many teachers have found their calling in life, have they maximized their potential as *leaders of learning*, thus finding True North?

A compass is the fundamental tool to navigating any journey, and we believe there is a compass for both the teacher and the learner, enabling both to find True North. Finding True North is not simply teaching a set of knowledge and skills each year that ultimately culminates with a diploma in the twelfth grade. **True North** is about *empowering students with the wisdom and confidence to exceed expectations throughout their school years and beyond*. True North is about instilling an unwavering desire in students to own their learning, as they discover the freedom and responsibility for their choices in learning. Teachers who aim for True North understand deeply that to educate means to draw out one’s potential.

Four foundational practices for teachers and learners align to the four cardinal directions on a compass. When perfectly balanced and fully integrated, these foundational practices become habits and provide an opportunity for students to be true partners in the teaching and learning process. Engaging students in this fashion has the potential to triple the rate of learning (Hattie, 2009). The journey on which you are about to travel will lead you to an in-depth understanding of what it means to find True North as a teacher and a learner. John Hattie expertly summed it up in a convincing declaration: “Visible Learning is when teachers see learning through the eyes of their students and students become their own teachers” (Hattie, 2013, p. 25).

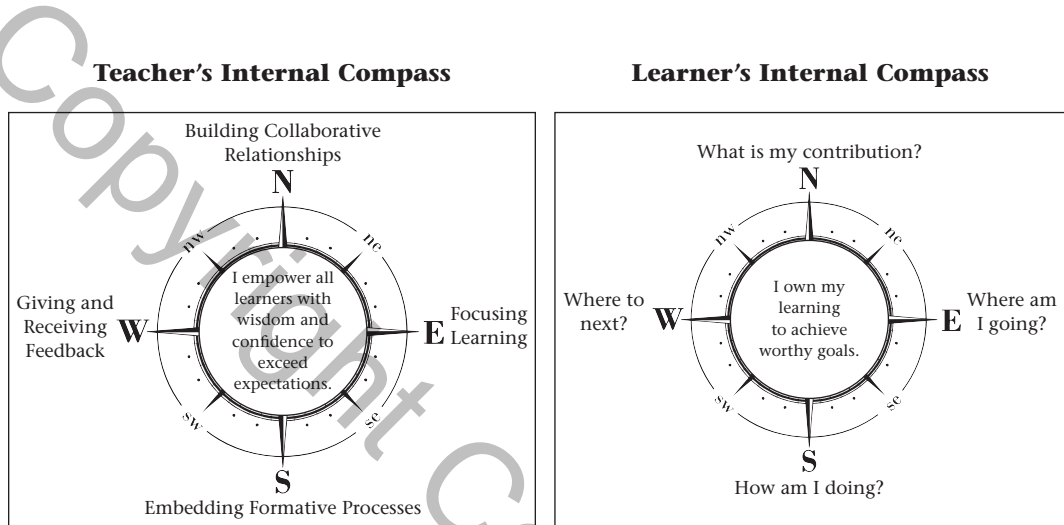
To get a clearer picture of what this means, let’s explore the four points of the compass: one compass for teaching and another for learning. When a teacher’s practice is fixated on the four compass points, empowering all students with the wisdom and confidence to exceed expectations, he or she begins to see learning through the eyes of students.

The Learner’s Internal Compass is fixated on owning the learning to achieve worthy goals. When a learner of any age, for any goal, can confidently answer the questions on the compass points, the learner has shifted positions and now becomes his or her own teacher. In a June 1, 2014, presentation titled “Student Voice: The Instrument of Change,” Russ Quaglia captured the essence of a **learner’s True North** when he said, “A student

with purpose is a student with unlimited promise.” Isn’t this what we really mean when we strive for students to be lifelong learners?

FINDING TRUE NORTH: THE INTERNAL COMPASSES

Four Foundational Practices and Essential Questions



TEACHER AS BOTH TEACHER AND LEARNER

It is critical to note that the teacher is tethered to both compasses. Teachers are the activators of learning for students and so must utilize the Teacher's Internal Compass to ensure that students are being provided with the greatest opportunity possible to realize their goals and to find their True North. However, the teacher must also be a learner; and before exploring the learning with students, he or she must be able to answer the questions linked to the Learner's Internal Compass.

STUDENTS AS BOTH TEACHER AND LEARNER

Students too are tethered to both compasses. As they work to answer the four questions from the Learner's Internal Compass, they also provide a great deal of learning for others, both teachers and other students, and so align to the Teacher's Internal Compass. If we have done our job in partnering with students to build ownership of learning, then both compasses will be realized for teachers and learners.

BEGINNING THE EXPEDITION

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.

—Helen Keller

Two highly competitive men—Frederick A. Cook and Robert E. Peary, both full of conviction and passion—were simultaneously obsessed with leading their own expeditions to find True North in 1909. Given the harsh conditions and relatively primitive navigational tools, each expedition's survival and success depended on forging trusting relationships and a collective effort of the team to achieve the goal.

As it was for the two expeditions, building trusting relationships and a united team effort is just as critical to the success of students and teachers in classrooms, schools, and school systems today. The job of providing a quality education for students is a very difficult one to accomplish alone. It is the team effort that hinges on the strength of relationships between the teacher and the students in each classroom and among the adults in the building. And yet it is what happens with one student at a time, one teacher at a time, one classroom at a time, one school at a time, and ultimately within an entire school community.

We recognize that every reader will begin this journey at a different starting point. It is our hope that you affirm many of your core beliefs and also experience some cognitive dissonance as you examine your current practices and contemplate potential changes in your classroom. Please keep in mind that building a collaborative classroom conducive to partnering with students is a process of change fraught with wonderful celebrations and insightful setbacks. It is not something that happens with the snap of your fingers. You will learn as much from your successes as from your missteps. It is all about learning, analyzing your impact on students, and adjusting your strategies that can ultimately alter your beliefs. Fortunately, when you invite the students on this journey, they will become your greatest allies, and you will learn as much or more from them as they will learn from you. They are your partners on this learning expedition.

As you engage in and interact with this book, we will expose each cardinal point of the two compasses to reveal how teachers successfully lead the expedition of learning with students as full-fledged partners. The book is organized into three interrelated sections that serve as signposts to navigate the journey: Defining the Journey, Learning on the Journey, and Retracing and Extending the Journey. Within each section, the chapters describe specific roles and responsibilities that can be shared between the teacher and the student and align to the natural teaching and learning

cycle, thus providing a *road map* for partnering with students to build ownership of learning.

CHAPTER DESCRIPTIONS

PART I: Defining the Journey

Chapter 1: *Defining Collaborative Relationships for Learning* illuminates the beliefs and behaviors associated with positive teacher–student relationships essential to creating a culture that accelerates student learning.

Chapter 2: *Defining Essential Learnings* establishes a step-by-step process teachers can follow to find clarity in what is essential for students to know and be able to do.

Chapter 3: *Defining Criteria for Success* provides teachers with a process to translate the standards into meaningful Learning Intentions, criteria for success, and personalized learning goals.

PART II: Learning on the Journey

Chapter 4: *Learner Strategies for Life* shines a powerful spotlight on no-cost instructional and Learner Strategies that can more than double the rate of learning.

Chapter 5: *Learning Through Effective Feedback* explores the often hidden element of reciprocal feedback in the classroom to establish the feedback structures and strategies that get results.

PART III: Retracing and Extending the Journey

Chapter 6: *Retracing Evidence to Prove and Extend Learning* provides an eye-opening process in which students prove their learning by aligning evidence to the Learning Intentions as they build an awareness of what works for them as learners.

Chapter 7: *Retracing and Extending the Process: A Summary to Guide Teachers and Leaders* provides a critical review of the process and outlines a role for leaders by recognizing students as our greatest asset.