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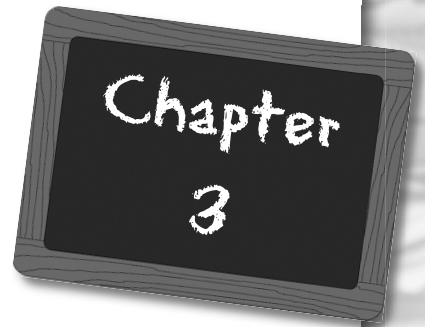
# Preface: Who Am I?

My name is Danny, and I am a teacher of students of all ages, cultures, shapes, and sizes. I have taught students ranging from preschoolers to rocket scientists. I can say that because I used to teach English as a second language to engineering students at the University of Southern California.

I became a teacher because of the movie *Stand and Deliver*. If you haven't seen it, do yourself a favor and rent a copy. It tells the inspirational true story of Jaime Escalante (played brilliantly by Edward James Olmos), who goes to Garfield High School in East Los Angeles to teach A.P. Calculus. I decided I was going to be just like Jaime Escalante, so I signed up to be a high school social studies teacher in the inner city. I spent the bulk of my teaching career working in Compton, California, located in south central Los Angeles. Along the way, I managed to work with high school students, middle school students, upper elementary school students, and very little children. However, instead of preparing students for college, I often found myself coming home with snot spots on the knees of my pants.

What I learned, more than anything, is that what works for a twelfth grader does not necessarily work for a kindergartner, but what works for a kindergartner works for all ages. Working with younger students helped me find my passion for teaching, and I began to understand that good teaching requires inspiration, perspiration, and motivation. This book is a compilation of the baker's dozen of lessons I've learned from the teaching trenches. I hope you enjoy it.

Danny Brassell, Ph.D.



## Passion Is Powerful

Stand up right now and repeat after me: I love to teach!

Now wave your arms wildly and give yourself a hoot and a holler. Bring this book to school, stand in front of your students, and lead them in this chant:

(You say) Who? Who? Who's the best?  
(Students say) We're! We're! We're the best!  
(You say) Who's the best?  
(Students say) We're the best!  
(Everybody says) On all tests!

Get pumped up about teaching. Love what you do and you'll never work a day in your life. No matter how corny it may sound, your vocation should be like a vacation. The people who are jazzed about teaching teach better and longer.

Why did you become a teacher? I am going to go out on a limb and suggest it was not for the high pay or heaps of praise constantly bestowed on teachers. (If you teach in a school district that provides these, please send me the address.) I bet you became a teacher for the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge said that "nothing is so contagious as enthusiasm." If you're enthusiastic about the things you are working on, people will ask you to do interesting things. People feel your passion, and students certainly feel your passion for teaching. Good teachers passionately pursue excellence.

Remember the old Chinese proverb: a person without a smiling face must not open a shop. What does that mean? If you're having a bad week in the classroom, please remember these two simple words: sick day. Take a day off. Go to the mall. Try not to discipline other people's children while you are there. Treat yourself to a nice meal. Watch a movie. Read a book! The next day, you are going to return to school feeling reinvigorated. Your students will feel re-energized and jazzed to see you. And I don't know about you, but whenever I took a sick day (also known among teachers as a mental health day), I requested the crankiest substitute to fill in for me. I wanted my students to be begging to get me back.

Your passion is reflected in everything you do. We need you to teach for a long time, and the more you incorporate your passion into the classroom, the more likely you are to keep teaching for a long time. I've observed thousands of teachers, and it usually takes me less than a minute to pinpoint a teacher's interests. If Ms. Thompson's students are always singing, it's very likely that Ms. Thompson likes music. If Mrs. Pierce's students seem to conduct a lot of science experiments, my guess would be that Mrs. Pierce enjoys science.

For years, I have attended workshops and trainings that have emphasized that we remember:

- 10% of what we read
- 20% of what we hear
- 30% of what we see
- 50% of what we see and hear
- 70% of what we discuss
- 80% of what we experience
- 95% of what we teach someone else

The funny thing about these numbers is that they are completely bogus. They are based on Dale's Cone of Experience (Dale 1969), which attempted to illustrate the effectiveness of audio-visual media. Dale never offered any research to support his claims, and the numbers that have been attributed to his "cone of experience" were made up

by others. Regardless, I like the idea, so I have always emphasized to my students that our goal is to spend the bulk of our learning time experiencing new things, discussing these experiences, and reteaching our experiences to others. We need to be passionate about learning. My favorite quote about passion comes from Pablo Picasso. He said, “If they took away all my paints, I’d use pastels. If they took away my pastels, I’d use crayons. If they took away my crayons, I’d use a pencil. If they put me in a cell and stripped me of everything, I’d spit on my finger and draw on the wall.” Dang! That dude loved to paint! There wasn’t anything that anyone could do to prevent Picasso from pursuing his passion. What a terrific example for all of us to follow.

I spend too much time away from my family while speaking at seminars across the country. One of the things I do to remind my wife that I’m thinking of her while I’m away is to place “love notes” for her throughout the house. For students, I place notes of encouragement in their books. For example, I’ll leave a signed note in one of Efraim’s books that says, “Efraim—I love the way you share books with your tablemates.” Or I’ll leave a signed note in Laura’s desk that says, “Laura—I love how clean you keep your desk.” I want kids to be as excited about finding the notes as I am about writing them.

Anyone who knows me knows that I am passionate about reading, and I strive to turn students into passionate readers. To do this, I need my students to come to school. When I discovered that Tuesdays had the lowest attendance of the week, I came up with Terrific Tuesdays.

When students came into the classroom on Tuesday mornings, they would rush to their desks to find books. Each book had a sticky note attached with a personalized message like “Rachelle—I know how much you love horses. Enjoy this book about horses. Love, The Book Fairy.” Students would jump up in the air, clinging to their books and yelling, “The Book Fairy came! The Book Fairy came!” Once I started leaving books from the Book Fairy, attendance in my class on Tuesdays skyrocketed to almost 100 percent. More importantly, my students were smiling, excited, and sharing their