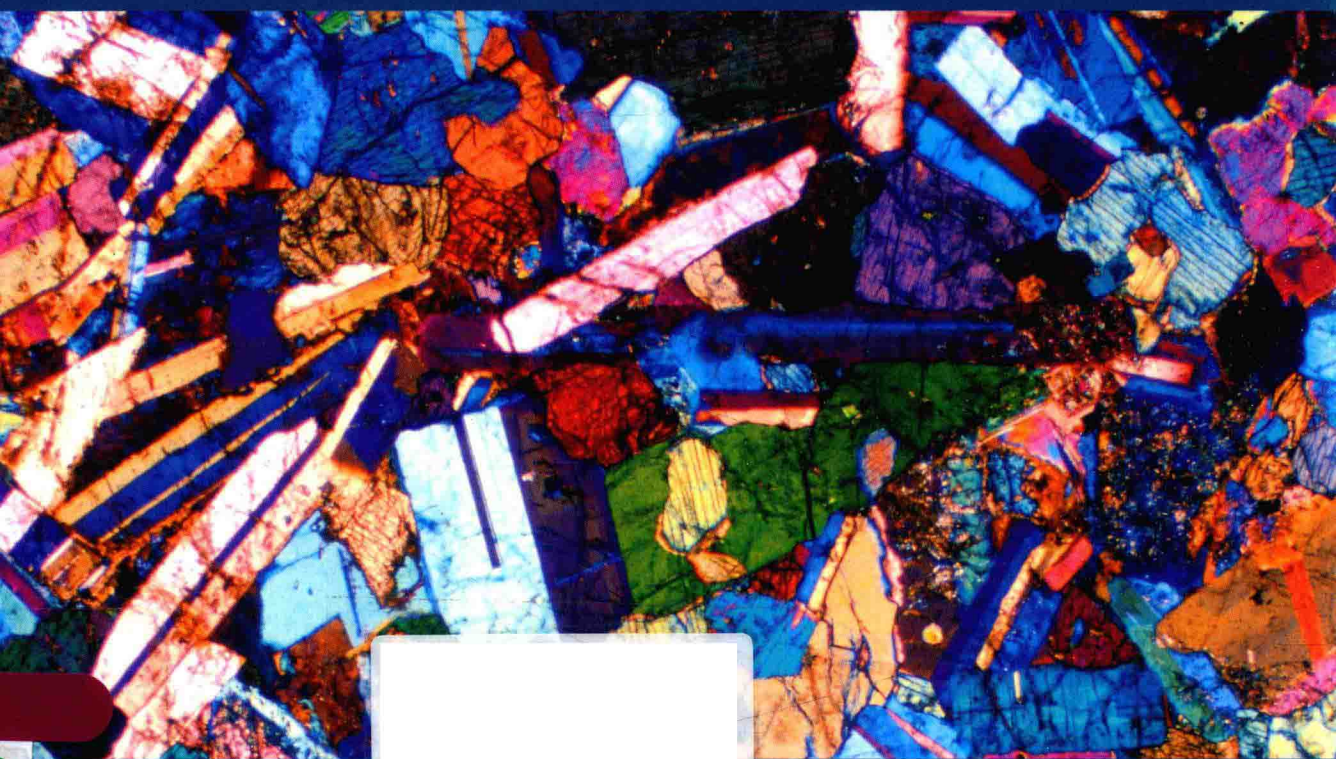


TURNING ON LEARNING

Five Approaches for Multicultural Teaching Plans
for Race, Class, Gender, and Disability

Fifth Edition



CARL A. GRANT | CHRISTINE E. SLEETER

Turning on Learning

Five Approaches for Multicultural Teaching
Plans for Race, Class, Gender, and Disability

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To the many teachers who have found this book helpful and supportive

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Preface

This book is the practical, lesson-based companion to *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender* (Wiley, 2009). *Turning on Learning* grew out of the requests of teachers and preservice education students for specific illustrations of how to work with diversity, excite and improve the academic achievement of their students. Over the years, we have communicated with many teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and teacher education students around the country who have repeatedly challenged us to show them how to apply our ideas in their classrooms. Theories have value only when they can be demonstrated and used in daily practice and when they offer concrete possibilities. This book provides these possibilities.

The text is grounded in theories and philosophies supporting multicultural education. Attention is given to classroom concerns related to race, class, gender, disability, language, religion, sexual orientation and social justice.

Turning on Learning contains many lesson plans that cover a variety of subject areas and grade levels 1 through 12, as well as action research activities that investigate the various dimensions of teaching. Many of the lesson plans are written by classroom teachers, and all of them have been examined by practicing teachers. But the book is more than a how-to manual. Rather, it is designed to help the teacher or teacher education student teach from a multicultural perspective. Most lesson plans offers a “Before” version—the lesson as it is usually taught—and an “After” version—how the lesson can be improved to “turn on” learning. A discussion explaining why the changes were made follows each lesson plan.

► NEW TO THIS EDITION

In this fifth edition, we added some new lessons. These new plans strengthen the Human Relations Approach and the ~~Multicultural Education~~ Approach. Throughout the book we have added new resource materials, up-dated information where necessary, up-dated terminology and changed the Table of Content to make it more user friendly. Over the life of the book, we have seen much more multicultural material become available, we have carefully selected the best of the best to include.

It is hoped that readers will use not only the lesson plans in this book but also the process for modifying teaching in their own daily curriculum and instruction. We are confident that, in the process, more students will become excited about learning and enthusiastic about living in and bettering their world.

► ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Carl A. Grant
Christine E. Sleeter

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What Turns Your Students On?

Can you imagine what it would be like to be a student in your own classroom or in one with which you are familiar? If you are like most educators, you probably find it difficult to imagine yourself as the student. You may have trouble remembering who you were as a student and realizing that a full quarter century may have elapsed since you were the age of students now in school. Even if you are now a college student, your elementary, middle, and high school years probably seem like a long time ago.

Placing ourselves in the role of student often involves more than a leap across time to a role we no longer occupy. For many of us, it involves trying to identify with someone who visibly differs from ourselves and who is growing up in and influenced by a world that brings challenges, the likes of which we did not have to deal with when we were young. Some of these challenges are caused by globalization, technology, and circumstances from the tragic and horrifying events of September 11, 2001. In addition, as we look at the multitude of ethnicities, people stratified by economic conditions, and people who live, behave, or dress according to a particular culture or lifestyle that is different from our own, we wonder what ideas we should put into practice. For many of us these challenges threaten our ideas of a “good” world. Add to that the unresolved issues surrounding immigration that influence many schools; and how and what to teach become a big mystery.

Compounding our wonderment is the stark reality that we don’t have many reference points. We have few human resources—such as fellow teachers from different ethnic and cultural groups—that we can turn to for answers or suggestions. This is so because there is about an 85 percent chance that you, the reader, are White and female. According to the National Center for Education Information report in 2005, the K-12 public school teaching force in the United States is getting older, more female, slightly less White, and more experienced. The Report notes that in 2005 the teaching profession was 85 percent White and the percentage of teachers of color had increased over the previous few years, especially with an increase in Hispanic teachers. Many of you live in middle-class conditions and have never experienced poverty. Most of you are privileged without realizing all of the options that you take for granted, and many of you have rarely—if ever—been in a daily situation where you are the minority, the only person who represents your ethnic, racial, or sexual orientation group. Very few of you were ever in special education. Most of you were educated your entire lives in your first language.

The gap between your own experiences and personal identity and those of your students may be small, or it may be tremendous. But there is a gap, and it will continue to grow as the student population becomes more diverse. The Children's Defense Fund (1998) reports the following information about children born in the United States:

- 1 in 2 will live in a single-parent family at some point in childhood.
- 1 in 3 will be poor at some point in childhood.
- 1 in 3 is behind a year or more in school.
- 2 in 5 will never complete a single year of college.
- 1 in 5 was born poor.
- 1 in 5 has a foreign-born mother.
- 1 in 7 has no health insurance.
- 1 in 24 lives with neither parent.
- 1 in 60 sees his or her parents divorce in any year.
- 1 in 1,056 will be killed by gunfire before age 20.

Also, "it is estimated that 750,000 school-age children live in shelters, cars, parks, abandoned building door stoops, or with other families" (West, 2001, p. 1). For these students, "it means growing up with a future dimmed by an 'abundance of nothing.'" Now add to this the following, also provided by the Children Defense Fund:

Each Day in America

March 2008

2 mothers die from complications of pregnancy or childbirth.
4 children are killed by abuse or neglect.
5 children or teens commit suicide.
8 children or teens are killed by firearms.
32 children or teens die from accidents.
78 babies die before their first birthdays.
155 children are arrested for violent crimes.
296 children are arrested for drug crimes.
928 babies are born at low birthweight.
1,154 babies are born to teen mothers.
1,511 public school students are corporally punished.*
2,145 babies are born without health insurance.
2,467 high school students drop out.*
2,421 children are confirmed as abused or neglected.
2,483 babies are born into poverty.
3,477 children are arrested.
18,221 public school students are suspended.*

*Based on calculations per school day (180 days of seven hours each)

Our intent is not to cause alarm, but if we provoke you, that is good. Our intent is to invite you to examine how you are meeting and working with students; we also invite and, indeed, encourage you to become aware of what life in today's schools is like

from students' perspectives. We have observed teachers who are willing to learn from their students, who view teaching and learning as a two-way interchange. As "students of their students," these teachers do an excellent job of building instruction around their students' interests and perspectives. Their classrooms are exciting places because they "turn on" learning. These teachers have not become enslaved by the accountability and high-stakes tests mania. They teach students so that they will be successful on standardized tests without forgetting that schooling and education are much more than the score on an achievement test.

On the other hand, we also have observed some teachers who ignore all else, and their teaching is designed solely to help students do well on standardized tests. We see other teachers who tend to overlook their students' identities and experiences, who teach as if their students were just like themselves. Still other teachers ignore and marginalize students who are different from themselves, or who are academically challenging. When the gap between teacher and student is not bridged, learning gets "turned off." Motivation to learn and to pass tests, including achievement tests, wanes. In the upper grades, thoughts about leaving school increase. In these circumstances, students are as much "pushed out" of school as they drop out. Symptoms of turned-off learning include students' seeming inability to grasp concepts, to exert effort, and to display enthusiasm; repeated lateness or absence; boredom; avoidance; and sloppy or poor-quality work. Furthermore, gifted and talented students tend to underperform, doing just enough to get by. When students are turned off, teaching feels like a chore or even a battle.

Unfortunately, the latter type of teaching approach is more common than the former, and with the student dropout rate increasing—between 347,000 and 544,000 tenth-through twelfth-grade students dropped out over the last decade (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). In other words, if you teach high school, according to estimates from the National Education Association (NEA 2004) you may expect about 30 percent of your students to drop out before graduation, meaning about one million students fail to graduate from high school every year. In addition, only five in ten Black and Hispanic students graduate on time with a standard diploma, and fewer than half of American Indian and Alaska Native students complete high school. Further, NEA reports that each class of high school dropouts costs the nation more than \$200 billion in lost wages and tax revenues, as well as spending for social support programs.

The situation is not likely to get better unless an effort is made to improve it. We term this ineffective teaching approach "business as usual," and its frequent use has been documented by recent studies of schools, in which researchers have observed classrooms and interviewed teachers and students (Anyon, 1981; Cuban, 1993; Everhart, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Grant & Sleeter, 1996; Lareau, 2000; Oakes, 1985; Payne, 1984; Solomon, 1992; Valli, 1986; Weis, 1990; Schultz, 2008). Teaching strategies using the business-as-usual approach are fairly standardized and routine: teachers talk, and students sit and listen or read and complete worksheets. Teaching to pass high-stakes tests takes over most of the school day. Students are tested mainly on what they have memorized and are usually marched through the material with few, if any, adaptations for their individual learning styles, rates, skills, and interest. Although there is some variety and individualization at the elementary level, there is very little at the secondary level.

Furthermore, course content is fairly uniform among schools and is not selected on the basis of student interest or experiential background; instead, it is selected according to that material deemed necessary to pass tests. In fact, course content becomes increasingly removed from students' day-to-day experiences as they progress through the secondary grade levels, even though older students become more concerned about their personal identities and their relationships with their immediate environment. Course content also tends to emphasize the White, wealthy male experience, or it presents information in a sterile, passive manner that neither invites nor encourages student participation. Also, content is taught in English, with the assumption that academic learning can take place only in English. Although attempts during the past three decades to make curricula multicultural, bilingual, and nonsexist have removed many blatant omissions and stereotypes and have added culturally diverse pictures, examples, and some story content, most texts have not substantially enlarged the center of attention beyond European Americans and, to a lesser extent, African Americans.

In the business-as-usual approach, students tend to be grouped for instruction in ways that reproduce social stratification patterns in the larger society. For example, in the elementary grades, ability grouping in reading and math usually reinforces race and social class differences, and groups are usually taught in ways that help them become increasingly segregated over the years. The use of tracking is widespread in our secondary schools. In tracking, certain students—primarily those of White and middle- or upper-class backgrounds—are taken from their elementary school ability groups and prepared for college; other students—primarily those of lower-class and minority backgrounds—are prepared for blue- or pink-collar labor; yet others are prepared for the “general” labor market. We need to note here that some Asian American students are performing excellently in school, but not all groups of Asian Americans or immigrants from Southeast Asia are doing so. The model minority slogan attached to Asian American students can cause teachers to miss instructional opportunities by assuming that the students know more than they actually do and that all Asian Americans students are high achievers.

Special education often constitutes a track below the lower track for students whom the regular program is unable to accommodate, whereas gifted programs offer the most socially advantaged children the best instruction. Students who manage to be placed in the upper groups are often similar to their teachers and are more likely to find school stimulating. Other students—the numbers increase in the higher grades—often find school boring and irrelevant. However, it is not the idea of education that turns students off, for most recognize the value in learning and want to learn. What turns many students off is teaching that is routine and passive, course content that is unconnected to daily life, curriculum and pedagogy that do not meet their language needs, lack of accommodation to different learning styles, and a lack of intellectual challenge.

We interviewed students who were from a working-class background and attended a desegregated school, and asked them about their perceptions of school (Grant & Sleeter, 1996). We found them critical of what the typical classroom offers but cognizant of what makes them want to learn. Regarding the business-as-usual teaching approach, students made the following comments:

JODY: I got science first hour, and you know you're gonna be doing an experiment or taking notes or something. It's one of three things: you take notes, you

read, or you do an experiment, and that's it. And you know what's coming up and it's not no fun, it's better if you get surprised.

SHIRLEY: We always do a certain thing through the week [in English]. Like the first day we do these little things, we read and then we have to answer questions about it. And the second day, he's got it planned day through day so if you miss Tuesday you know what you did Tuesday because you always do the same thing. Tuesday we have to work out of a workbook. And Wednesday we finish up the workbook, turn in the assignment, and start on our spelling test. Like, we write down words and get their meanings and stuff. And it goes on like that. It's boring in his class.

ANGELA: Social studies was boring because I just sat there. We just sat down and listened to him and that gets boring.

PHIL: A lot of the reason why the kids screw up in class is because they can see no practical use for what they are learning.

The students also appraised various teaching strategies for us, indicating which ones helped them to learn and which ones turned them on to learning (see Table 1.1). (Although different groups of students may rate activities differently, teachers are often unaware of or overlook students' appraisals.)

As noted earlier, some teachers stimulate student learning effectively, and students know which teachers do so. The students we interviewed (Grant & Sleeter, 1996) commented about the classes in which they felt they had learned the most. For example, one student commented on teaching strategies and curriculum content:

KRISTEN: Multicultural [education] I like because it's different and [I like] publications because it's fun.

RESEARCHER: What makes publications fun?

KRISTEN: You get to go out and report and interview people, write stories to put in the [school newspaper].

RESEARCHER: Why do you like multicultural education?

KRISTEN: You get to study all the different people and stuff you never knew before—things that people say about people that are in books and

Table 1.1 Students' Appraisals of Classroom Activities

Like, Learn From This Activity	Neutral or Mixed Appraisals	Don't Like, Don't Learn From This Activity
Small-group projects	Independent project	Listening to lecture without taking notes
Whole-class discussions in which kids do most of the talking	Recitation (teacher asks questions and kids respond)	Watching films (especially science films)
Listening to speakers	Taking lecture notes	Interviewing people
Doing handouts	Labs, experiments	Reading
Reading, then answering questions		

Source: Adapted from Grant & Sleeter (1996), p. 139.

stuff that you think is true, and we learn the truth about it. Like how the whites treated the Indians a long time ago. (p. 162)

Grace spoke with us about tests, and her comments may come as a surprise:

RESEARCHER: What do you think about those kinds of tests that you got today? You have to write definitions and then answer questions on the last part. They weren't really questions that you could answer by giving one or two words. It looked like they were questions you really had to think about.

GRACE: Yeah. We had to write long definitions for them and then you had to write what you thought on the last ones.

RESEARCHER: Would you rather have a test like that where you write down what you think or where you write down answers?

GRACE: What I think.

RESEARCHER: In other classes, are you asked to write down what you think like you were in this one?

GRACE: No, in most of the classes they give you notes, and you have to study those notes, and then what is in those notes you have to write on the test.

RESEARCHER: What is different about the class you were just in?

GRACE: I guess it's harder. (p. 167)

Hal expressed a definite interest in being able to formulate questions to direct his learning:

RESEARCHER: So you feel that interviewing is a good way to learn?

HAL: Yeah, because you're asking questions that you want to know and they're giving you answers that are interesting about what you're asking and stuff.

RESEARCHER: How about listening to speakers in class?

HAL: Yeah, because again you're asking questions that you want to know. One of my friends' dad came here and he was from Lebanon and we got to ask questions about it. It's easier to remember than learning from a book because they're telling us stuff that you really don't care about. This way you're asking what you want to know. (p. 168)

Lupe underscored the value of active participation in learning:

LUPE: In our government class we have to take a vote and the whole class is all together in it. We make up our own tests and take votes and stuff. That was only in one class. We only did it one time.

RESEARCHER: What did you think about that?

LUPE: I like it because that way you get more ideas. (pp. 168–169)

Finally, Alvin emphasized the importance of curriculum content being multicultural:

RESEARCHER: Do you think it's important for other kids here to know about what the blacks do, who the heroes are, the contributions made?

ALVIN: Yeah, because some people think that blacks are troublemakers. They don't know what they do or nothing. (p. 171)

Consider again the question with which we opened this chapter: What would it be like to be a student in your own classroom or in one with which you are familiar? What is school like for Brad, or Juanita, or Yvonne, or Carlos, or Ngoc? Does it turn them on to learning, or does it teach them routines and ignore the importance of using their own minds? If this first chapter has stirred some emotion, we encourage you to study this book carefully and to use it to help you examine and experiment with your own teaching.

► CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

A concern you may have is that the home and neighborhood circumstances of some students make it hard for them to concentrate on school. Some students have personal problems that can frustrate the patience and creativity of dedicated teachers. For example, it is hard for a student to get turned on to math if he or she is hungry, worried about a problem at home, homeless, believes she or he is incapable of doing well in school, feels intimidated by high-stakes tests, doesn't understand the language of instruction, feels abandoned by a loved one, is worried about being pregnant, is concerned about his or her safety in traveling to and from school, or is preoccupied with being popular. Other students may have less intense personal problems, such as being overly clothes conscious, that can also frustrate a teacher. Although this book does not deal specifically with the problems that students bring to school, it is important to consider carefully how these factors can limit students' abilities, as well as the extent to which teachers use them as excuses for not trying to turn students on to learning.

Consider the following example: Several years ago one of the authors took up ice skating during a stressful period. The author would often arrive at the ice rink feeling moody, depressed, and preoccupied. After an hour of intense skating instruction and practice, the author would discover that personal problems had drifted to the back of the mind, while the activity and fun of the immediate learning situation took over. Skating instruction not only pushed aside personal worries for a while, but it also left the author with a refreshing feeling of having learned something new, having accomplished something. Thank goodness the skating instructor never labeled the author as too "emotionally disturbed" (not to mention too old!) to learn! In fact, the skating instructor's skill, enthusiasm, persistence, and interest contributed to the author's sense of well-being by providing a delightful alternative to the author's problems for an hour and by helping the author achieve something in spite of whatever else might have been going wrong that day. So it is with good teaching. It may not solve a student's problems, but it may partially divert a student from them by providing an opportunity for the student to develop self-respect and to enjoy life and companionship for several hours a day.

Entertainment should not be confused with teaching; during the 1960s through the early 1980s, for example, such was often the case. Teachers at that time were

overly concerned with making students like them and with showing students that they liked them. The affective side of teaching is important, but the cognitive side—helping students to develop to the best of their academic ability—is equally important.

► THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

This book is chock-full of insightful curriculum and instruction ideas. A close reading of the different phases of the lesson plans will add to teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills. The book does not use a "recipe" approach to turning on learning. Although it contains many practical and useful ideas for successful teaching, its primary intent is to help you develop your own analytical and creative teaching skills.

In the remaining five chapters of *Turning on Learning*, we provide a framework for examining five different teaching approaches that address human diversity—race, ethnicity, gender, social class, disability, and sexual orientation. In our work with teachers, we have observed that they have varying perspectives of human differences and of how to handle them in the classroom. Their perspectives can be grouped into five approaches, each having its own distinct goals, assumptions, and practices.

Chapter 2, "Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different," addresses the issue of how to help students who do not succeed in the existing classroom or societal mainstream. The approach discussed here builds bridges between the capabilities of the student and the demands of the school and wider society, so that the student can learn to function successfully in these contexts.

Chapter 3, "Human Relations," is concerned with helping students to get along better by appreciating each other and themselves. This approach concentrates on building positive feelings.

In Chapter 4, "Single-Group Studies," groups that tend to be left out of the existing curricula are discussed. This approach teaches students about groups such as women, Arab Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, people with disabilities, and people who are gay or lesbian.

Chapter 5, "Multicultural Education," combines much of the first three approaches. It suggests changes to most existing school practices for all students so that the school and classroom may become more concerned with human diversity, choice, and equal opportunity. It is hoped that such changes will bring about greater cultural pluralism and equal opportunity in society at large as today's students become tomorrow's citizens.

Finally, Chapter 6, "Multicultural and Social Justice Education," addresses social inequalities among groups in society at large as well as in students' own experiences, power, and social justice. The primary goals of this approach are to prepare students to work actively in groups and individually, to deal constructively with social problems, and to take charge of their own futures. To this end, the intersectionality of social constructs such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and the effects of power are used as the framework for teaching, research, learning, and social action.

We encourage you to read all of the chapters. Unless a particular chapter title strikes you as especially interesting, you will probably find it most helpful to read the chapters in sequence, since the approaches build on each other. Once you have finished reading the book, you will probably find that one approach appeals more to you than the others, although you may also like aspects of other approaches. The approach that appeals to

you the most should provide a point of departure for your own professional growth. Study that approach; work with its ideas; make it as much a part of your teaching as you can. If after you have worked with the approach you find it limited in ways you did not recognize initially, you may wish to reconsider the other approaches.

You need not practice only one approach. However, if you find yourself drawing bits and pieces from all the approaches without giving careful thought to any one approach in particular, ask yourself whether you are really engaging in business as usual. We have found that teachers who believe they are eclectic actually either prefer business as usual or simply have not spent enough time studying and applying each approach. We also encourage you to read our companion book, *Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender* (2009), to investigate further the thinking behind each approach.

► THE ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

Each chapter begins with an explanation of the teaching approach. Next are Action Research Activities that investigate some aspect of teaching that helps to implement the approach (and possibly subsequent approaches). The activities can help you to gather information about students, the curriculum, the school, or the school's community that will enable you to examine your classroom behavior and to teach more effectively. Following the activities are several pairs of sample lesson plans that are written in a before-and-after format. The "Before" lesson plans represent samples of curriculum and instruction as they usually exist: business as usual. Because they are based on the observations of teachers, popular curriculum guides and textbooks, and lesson plans developed by teachers, they may be familiar to you. The "After" lesson plans illustrate ways that existing curriculum and instruction can be changed to implement the approach described in each chapter and to turn on learning. Finally, each "After" lesson plan is followed by a discussion of why the plan was changed.

The primary goal of this book is to help you examine existing patterns of curriculum and instruction and then learn how to change them to respond better to human diversity—to turn on more learning. By studying the lesson plans and discussions of changes carefully, you will learn how changes to business as usual can enable you to reach more students and to make a positive difference. You will also benefit from examining your own curriculum and instruction. Take a lesson or unit that you are planning to teach next week or next month and treat it as a "Before" plan. Then think of as many ways as possible that you can change the plan to implement the approach described in the chapter.

Spend time developing a good, workable "After" plan for yourself, and then try it out in the classroom. Do this over a period of time with several lessons and units, until you get the feel of the practices described in each chapter and until you can see what changes are improving your own teaching. As you become comfortable with some new ideas, try out additional ones.

Do not limit yourself to studying the lesson plans in your own subject area or grade level. The lessons in this book are illustrations of ideas; they are not simply recipes to follow. For example, if you teach ninth-grade math, you may find some good ideas about adapting instruction to students' learning styles in an elementary social studies lesson. Think about how you can use those ideas to help teach ninth-grade math.