

Study Guide

Chapter 1 ■ The Nonnegotiables: Six Principles for Teaching

1. As you read the descriptions of the six students at the beginning of the book, did you substitute names of your own students? How do you handle the challenge to educate these students in a diversified classroom of many? Discuss challenges and solutions with your colleagues.
2. In reading the six “nonnegotiables”, to which ones do you adhere? Is there one that resonates for you more than the others? Can you add another “nonnegotiable?”
3. Notice how teacher John develops the *before* part of his lesson on hardness of minerals. He hooks kids on an emotional level. What can you do to hook kids more effectively in your classroom? Share ideas.
4. Do you routinely ask students to monitor their learning? Describe/share some methods that you use.

Chapter 2 ■ Demystifying Reading: Helping Every Reader Tackle Texts

1. We are role models for our students. In what ways do we model the fact that we are literate adults? How do you discuss reading with your students?

2. The authors believe that all teachers are teachers of reading. Do you feel confident in your ability to teach reading? Where can you go for more help? How might you better help your students?
3. What strategy (or strategies) offered in this chapter might help your students as they try to make meaning out of text? Try modeling one for them and discuss with your study group how things went.
4. How do you currently handle reading aloud in your classroom? What works and doesn't work with your current method? Are there strategies in this chapter you are willing to try to see if kids will stay tuned in better?
5. In your district, are teachers of content areas included in reading discussions? Are they provided in-service on new techniques or initiatives focused on teaching reading? Are content-area teachers included in your faculty discussions and analyses of reading scores? Are they using the same methods, language, and focal points as the teachers of reading? If not, what might you do to change this so that you have more support?
6. Sometimes we are so well educated in our field of study that we don't understand how others cannot read and grasp the information quickly. Try this in a discussion group: Give your text (textbook, magazine article, internet article, newspaper, and so on) to someone *without* the same expertise as you. Ask them to identify parts that are unclear. Roberta and Donna have done this and found it eye-opening and very helpful. As teachers, they are then better able to provide scaffolding for those who need it.

Chapter 3 ■ Here Today, Gone Tomorrow? Strategies That Help Students Retain Vocabulary

1. As you challenge students to learn new vocabulary, challenge yourself to develop or adopt a new vocabulary activity for every unit. Vary the strategies to add excitement to vocabulary instruction. Next, enjoy the positive results!
2. How do you differentiate your approach to teaching vocabulary for different types of learners? Do you use different methods? Different time allotments? How do you reinforce your strategies? Share ideas among the colleagues in this study group and increase your repertoire.
3. What types of vocabulary games work particularly well for your students? Discuss why you think they are successful.
4. Which do you find helps your students the most—the vocabulary activities that accompany your teacher's edition of the text or those that you have made yourself? Discuss why. How do they differ?

Chapter 4 ■ Inviting Writing: Helping Students Understand Content

1. In what ways do you engage students to “think out loud on paper”? Share what you do with your group and exchange ideas.
2. With today’s emphasis on testing (which includes writing), how often do your students *practice* writing to learn in your classroom? How could you incorporate more opportunities to write?
3. Think of a particular student on your roster who struggles with writing. Could writing that is not for a grade result in a reduction of stress, foster confidence, and promote learning? Can you think of some ways to help that student overcome his/her struggles? Discuss among your group and share ideas.
4. How important do you think it is to give students choice in a writing assignment? Should you assign one topic or several? Give options on the type of writing (poem, essay, etc.)? Or, should you leave the assignment very open-ended? Discuss your beliefs among your colleagues.
5. The act of creation can make people feel good. How do you currently foster creativity in your classroom? Can any of the poetry assignments in this chapter be adapted to your classroom? Share ideas among your group. Try something new and report the results back to the group.
6. One reason that Roberta’s poetry assignments are successful is because she is very aware of her students’ prior poetry experiences in other grades. Are you aware of the sequence of the writing and language arts curriculum in your district? If not, how can you find out?
7. When discussing writing, the authors say, “Writing expresses complete thoughts and integrates the use of vocabulary in a meaningful way.” Do you weave meaningful but nongraded writing into your weekly lesson plans? Why or why not? Discuss responses among your group.
8. Examine your teacher text. Is it a gold mine of thought-provoking questions that can be used for jottings in your classroom? Do you use bell-ringers to start or end a class? If these require only a few words to answer, how can you restructure them to evoke longer written responses from your students?
9. Using “exit slips” as a quick glance into the minds of your young scholars is a way for you to evaluate the effectiveness of a lesson. How can you show your students that their comments have value to both you and them? Brainstorm some ideas and share with your group.

Chapter 5 ■ Many Paths, One Destination: Tapping Into Different Learning Styles

1. How can you add some acting out or drama to your lessons? Donna made a dull section of her textbook come alive through drama. What can you do? Need some ideas? Check out www.teachertube.com.
2. In addition, can you hook your students into these dramatic renditions of the curriculum by utilizing new technology? How about a visual review for a unit? Share your results with other classes, schools, and/or countries through technology. Let your pupils be the stars!
3. Try asking your students to play the classic parlor game Charades using vocabulary words.
4. In this chapter, the author's state, "Pop Culture is their world, and frankly, those connections are the ones that are most likely to count in their learning." How can you turn this to your advantage? Discuss with your group, taking advantage of your generational differences and varied musical tastes to learn new ways to connect with students.
5. Is there any particular unit that involves just too much repeated seat work with worksheets? Can you boost its energy with stations set up around the room? Check out pages 99–103 for ideas.
6. "Go To Your Corners", "Ferris Wheel", and "GOGO" are ideas presented that have students up and moving, discussing, and learning. How can you use these strategies in your classroom? Remember, it gives that needed relief to revved up kids who find it difficult to sit for 50 minutes!
7. We've all heard that "A picture is worth a thousand words." With today's technology, we have greater than ever access to pictures. How can you use photographs and art to enhance your curriculum?

Chapter 6 ■ Who Is Responsible for Students' Learning?

1. How do you structure student groupings in your classroom to provide opportunities for movement, different seating, and cooperative partners? Are you providing enough variety? What more can you do?
2. Student sharing of ideas can be powerful. Evaluate the amount of time you allow for that. Brainstorm ways that you can make this a more regular part of your class time.
3. How do you teach your students in ways that encourage metacognition? Are they aware of their learning? Do you provide fix-it strategies that they

regularly use? Brainstorm ways you could help students become more aware of their learning. Try implementing one and then report back to your study group how it went.

4. Need more help for struggling learners in your classroom? Who can you contact in your district and community? Reach out to someone and schedule time for them to work with a student or students.
5. Is there an idea presented in this book that made you cringe and say, “That’s not for me!” Is this because of your own learning experiences? Roberta ran into this when she repeatedly resisted the use of poetry in her classroom. Why? Because she doesn’t read or write poetry and is convinced that all the poetry genes in her family reside in her younger sister!

Needless to say, she was pleasantly surprised (stunned actually) when she took the plunge and introduced the Poetry Corner. Not only did her students write wonderful poems but their increased mastery of the vocabulary was evident in their test results! Since they had thought about and played with vocabulary in a creative manner, their comprehension was fabulous.

Is there a strategy that your students might excel at and enjoy even though you are hesitant to try it? Try that strategy and report back the results. (P.S. Roberta did author one of the poems in this book. Now that’s progress!)

6. Looking over Pink’s information, what changes do you think educators should make to better prepare students for their adult lives?
7. We encourage our students to be reflective learners and you are encouraged to be a reflective practitioner. Ask for feedback from a person or group—your students, a colleague, an administrator. Discuss with your study group what you learned from this feedback. Use it to become a better practitioner of your chosen craft!