Part II

Pass by the Path to Perfect and you will be Perplexed in the Province of Imperfect

"Sometimes we have to start by unlearning what we already know so that correct and more powerful learning can take place" (Hattie and Yates, 2014, p.114).

Owls and other raptors depend on ultraviolet vision to survive. The human eye has 3 types of color receptors – red, green and blue. Some birds have a 4th receptor allowing them to see UV. This is essential to their survival.

Mice and other raptor meals leave urine trails that raptors follow. The mice urine contains a substance only visible with ultraviolet vision – invisible to humans. How simple for raptors; they follow the urine trail to the rodent nest, wait for dinner to appear and then swoop down upon the unsuspecting mouse.

Without the urine trail raptors would be forced to search far and wide for food wasting much time and energy. Education desperately needs a path to follow – one that brings schools closer and closer to perfect. In Part II we move onto a landscape where the mouse urine has been picked up by a tornado and strewn everywhere. No trail appears in raptor chaos.

The foundation for education chaos is historic student demotivators. Hard working, talented educators in the midst of chaos will not move the system closer to perfect. Except for unduplicated, isolated success stories led by unique personalities, nothing seems to improve the education system. We can change this fact.

W. Edwards Deming loved to ask the question, "Who has the most control over a ship crossing the ocean?" After the audience guessed incorrectly, the captain, the navigator, and the

engine room chief, he stated the answer. “The person with the most control over the ship crossing the ocean is the person who designed the ship; it will never do better than it was designed to do.”

The people who designed our current education system are no longer with us. And yet, the education system they created still exists. Education will never do better than it was designed to do and thus the need is a better design.

We do have a huge problem; the current system cannot produce the results society desires. When problems occur in any organization there are two choices: (1) blame somebody or (2) dig deep to find the root cause(s) of the problem. It matters not if the problem is post-surgery infections, poor water quality or the fact that only 5 - 8% of high school students still love learning at school. In order to make a change we have to do more than just place a Band-Aid over low test scores, poor student motivation and lack of instructional retention. We need to get to the root of the issue and dig it out in order to plant something that can truly nourish our students.

Part II sets the stage for describing the path that leads to perfect schools in part III. It may seem like a negative section; people can take the descriptions of negatives as attacks on the educators. Remember, I am describing the design of the system people work in and not the people who work in the poorly designed system. I wish I could just skip parts I and II of this book and jump immediately into Part III, which describes the perfection path. However, until people agree that moving closer to perfect is possible (Part I), and then find the UV glasses to understand the chaos strewn everywhere (Part II), they reject the trail.

Advice for readers of Part II:

A. If you are an educator do not be defensive. You are not old enough to have created the practices that destroy intrinsic motivation.
B. If you are not an educator do not blame today's educators. They are not old enough to have created the practices that destroy intrinsic motivation.

Tony Bryk stated my purpose for Parts I & II very well when he wrote that improvement starts first with an agreement on what problem(s) we need to address. "We often jump to implement a policy or programmatic change before fully understanding the exact problem to be solved" (Byrk, 2015, p.468).

Could the person who designed the weekly spelling tests really have caused a great deal of the chaos and gap between where we are now and where we need to be?

Chapter 6

How to Know What Will be On the Test

Students might be told to remember, but appear to receive almost no guidance in how to remember. (Hattie and Yates, 2014)

"How did you get an 'A' on that test?" I asked, my mouth gaping open as I stared over my friend's shoulder in my college statistics class. My friend came to class a total of four times that month and yet there was a big, sharp "A" on his test. I, on the other hand, never missed a class, spent hours studying, reviewed my notes, and worked harder in this class than in any other class. Yet, I still was staring at a very curvy "C". I was baffled. What was my friend doing that I was missing? His response left me even more confused.

"I figured out his formula. Every professor has a formula. They test you on what they think is important, not necessarily the material we are learning. Once you figure that out you don't really need to study. All you have to do is give them the answer they want."

Even though that was a few decades ago, I now know that I was not alone. In fact, students in the generations to follow had similar experiences to mine. They spent hours studying, reviewing notes, reading previous assignments, creating study groups and paying hundreds of dollars to tutors. However, when exam grades were handed back the grades were lower than expected. The same was not true for the students who had figured out the professors' and teachers' formulas. They glanced over the material once or twice, took the exams and received top scores. The outcome was not matching the effort. How could students enjoy or even comprehend what they were learning when they spent so much time trying to achieve the elusive "A"?

In an audience of teachers and administrators I asked, “How many of you were able to figure out ahead of time what the professors were going to put on the exams?” About a quarter of the audience raised their hand. Next, I asked one of the teachers how she figured out what would be on the test. The answer both startled and impressed me.

The teacher shared that in college she was in a study group. But instead of studying, the group focused on figuring out the formula. The group spent the first half of their study time sharing insights and observations about the professor. Once all participants agreed on what information they felt was most important to the professor they studied and quizzed each other on only that material. Never mind trying to understand the actual material, or learning how to apply the knowledge, they were not going to be assessed on it anyway.

The goal is not to learn when using this strategy; it is to place in short-term memory precisely what is necessary to get a good grade. In my opinion, this strategy would score 2 or 3 points on the Will
& Thrill Matrix. That’s quite a distance from a perfect 9. Even worse, the students are paying for an education they are not receiving. What a waste of time and resources.

A few years earlier, while on the faculty at Oregon State University (OSU), I asked the president why the School of Education had such a poor reputation among administrators and faculty on campus. I expected him to say education professors were not any better teachers than our colleagues in other

departments. In my mind that would have been a fair observation. He did not say anything close to this.

The president of OSU said the School of Education's reputation was so poor because professors handed out too many "A's". Only one other department gave more A's than education. I was surprised, not that the School of Education assigned a lot of A's, but that the percentage of "A's" was the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of various departments. Even more surprising, the "A's" did equate to student knowledge. If they did, departments would be praised for producing students that have truly learned the material. The message was clear. Every professor was expected to have winners and losers. And if you had too many winners, you the professor, became a loser professor.

Obviously, there are differences between K-12 schools and universities. However, the similarity is striking. Education is made up of winners and losers. If you are a winner, congratulations, you have figured out the formula to get through school. And if you are the loser, good luck trying to get that "A", but it will never happen. The less we make school about learning, the less our students will learn. We will never have a perfect 9 school as long as the system dictates there must be winners and losers. Do you know a student, identified as a loser, who reports giving 100% effort and loving school?

I am not advocating all A's as a gift. That reminds me of the disastrous participation trophy experiment. As you read further you will notice that I am encouraging very high standards with a path for all students to meet them. Part III of *How to Create a Perfect School* lays out this path. Chapter 13 removes the confusion over what students are to learn. Chapter 16 explains that learn means learn; it does not mean cram and forget. With this understanding, learning becomes valuable, both to the teacher and to the students. Instead of school being a year-long guessing game of what matters most to the teachers, it becomes an active learning environment in

which students walk away with lasting knowledge. In order for this to happen, students need to be clear about what it is they are going to learn. Teacher clarity plays an important part in the success of our students.

According to John Hattie's *Visible Learning* research, located at VisibleLearningPlus.com teacher clarity about learning objectives almost doubles learning. It is critical that students know at the beginning of the year what key surface learning concepts they are going to learn. By stating these concepts up front, students are aware of how previous knowledge will build on new knowledge. They do not have to figure out the formula because everything they are expected to learn is clearly stated. Surface learning concepts are provided to students as a list with deep learning extensions for each surface learning item. There is more to teacher clarity than only telling students what they are to learn; lessons have to make sense. However, informing students about what they are going to learn over the duration of the course is the first step.

95% of our students no longer enjoy learning because they know it is a game of winners and losers. ThePerfect.School aims to forever erase students trying to crack the obscure "formula". Instead of students trying to figure out trivia tidbits versus essential knowledge according to their teacher's opinion, the teachers clearly state what students will learn at the beginning of the year, and return to this list repeatedly. Every student at the beginning of the course knows exactly what concepts will be tested. The guesswork is gone and the work of learning can commence uninhibited. However, this is just one of the issues that needs to be addressed in order to reconstruct the educational system. We also need to look at how data is collected and assessed. Once the information is presented, how do we determine that students are actually learning? Can bulletin boards and sticker charts harm our students' performance? The next chapter will delve into that very subject.

Chapter 7

Data are Like Baseball Bats; They can be Used for Harm or Joy

Burden always comes first; then vision. (Maxwell, 2007)

Teachers spend hours planning out the perfect bulletin board with the perfect theme to motivate students. A United States football field should do the trick. Everybody loves football. Right? First spend hours searching Pinterest researching how to make the field look as realistic as possible. Then cut out a helmet for each student, careful to not cut off the face guard. Grab a good permanent marker and write each student's name on the helmets. Make the letters large so that every student can read their name from across the room. After putting up the football field bulletin board explain the process to students. Yardage toward a touchdown will be awarded for satisfactorily completing specified assignments. Finally, sit back and watch all your students excel this year.

If we were to observe the classroom two weeks after this touchdown process begins, what do you think we would find? I can tell you without even seeing the board. The results are too predictable. All of the students are not excelling. The loser kids' helmets are still behind the one yard line, while other students' helmets are spread out over the whole field. Only a couple of helmets are approaching the end zone and these belong to the students who were already doing well, and did not need any further motivation.

Maybe this is an isolated event. Not so fast. Walk next door and witness a huge dart board bulletin board with a paper dart for each student. The same permanent marker was used to

bold each students' name on their dart. Some darts are on the bull's eye, some on outer rings and some darts are pinned up on the outside of all the rings.

Let's go to the next-door classroom.

How clever! This teacher chose a baseball diamond to motivate her students. Every student has a baseball with carefully drawn red stitching and their name in big black, bold letters. So well-constructed. We see the names of the single hit students, double hit students, triple hit students and home run students. Oh, and by the way, there are the strike out students' baseballs over to the side.

I am writing about bulletin boards that I have seen personally. This is not fiction. Each time I see a fancy bulletin board like the ones mentioned above, I know what the data will say without a second glance. No matter how creative the board is, the data remains the same. There are clear winners and clear losers posted for anyone to see at any moment of the day. Sure, for some students this process works. But for most students, especially the students that have been deemed losers in their previous classes, the board may be new, but the tactic remains the same. The baseball field did not work, neither did the dart board, so what makes this football field any different? Nothing, absolutely nothing.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is charged with the duty to keep airline passengers safe while they are on flights. They are responsible for assessing potential dangers and risks that passengers rarely think about as they prepare to fly. Baseball bats are not allowed in the cabin of the plane. This may seem inconvenient for a baseball player who only intends to carry his bat with him on the flight. But for someone who intends harm, having a

baseball bat in the cabin of a plane is extremely dangerous. Used the wrong way, a baseball bat becomes a weapon. As a frequent flier I am very glad the TSA does not allow baseball bats in the cabin of airplanes. Although most people have only joy in mind when using a baseball bat, the potential to do harm with the bat is what keeps it out of the airplane cabins.

We need DSA – Data Security Administration. Someone needs to ensure that data is not being used as a weapon in classrooms. Unfortunately, these types of charts are everywhere from multiplication tables, to books completed and behavior infractions. These charts label, humiliate and discourage students on a day-to-day basis. Our education system is in need of adults who know how to collect the data and use if or doing good and not for harm.

This chapter is not intended as another cruel swipe against teachers, especially when there is already far too much negativity against them. The teachers who created these bulletin boards were not intending to harm students. They have fallen privy to decades of bad habits. Habits disguised as colorful arrangements of paper stapled onto cork boards, with unattainable goals to inspire generations of students. The goal of learning to further the human experience and improve our world has been replaced by a never-ending campaign to raise test scores. Far too often the worth of a teacher is determined by what the test data reports. School funding, teacher salaries, and curriculum effectiveness all depend on what the test data says.

What if the data is doing more harm than good? Is it really helping anyone? Data can be used for harm or joy; the way it is being used in our current education system is mostly bad. One could say atrocious. In the chapters to come I will describe how data can be used not only to

maintain the kindergarten level of motivation, but to create an accurate picture of knowledge attained in the classroom, and even the entire school.

Chapters 13 and 14 describe in great detail how numerous teachers and their principals are using data successfully. They learned the secret to captivating joy in learning and using data appropriately to illustrate that joy. No longer do their students cringe when a bulletin board shows up in their classroom, not because they are all at the touchdown line, but because these bulletin boards celebrate their achievements without causing embarrassment. Every student is honored without any hint of ranking. Data collection, for public display, is a team effort and a team celebration. These educators put the Data Security Administration (DSA) out of business and will ensure that data is no longer used for harm, but for joy.

Chapter 8

"If you Behave After Lunch, I'll Let you Have Another Quiz"

Our schools must preserve and nurture the yearning for learning that everyone is born with. Joy in learning comes not so much from what is learned, but from the learning. (Deming,1994).

A student in Rachel Lutterman's grade 5 class in Ruidoso, New Mexico asked just before lunchtime, "Can we have another quiz?" Rachel answered, "If you behave after lunch, I'll let you have another quiz." This was her somewhat sarcastic way of saying, "Yes." She knew they would behave after lunch because of her expert classroom leadership skills and positive student-teacher relationships. She knew their intrinsic motivation was being preserved and they were having fun. She understood what Deming wrote, "We must preserve the power of intrinsic motivation, dignity. cooperation, curiosity, joy in learning, that people are born with" (Deming, 1994, p.121). Mrs. Lutterman did not rely on meaningless incentives to entice her students into wanting to learn. She did not dangle trinkets or stickers over their heads to get them to participate in her classroom discussions. Instead she tried a different strategy. And it paid off, big time.

When have you ever heard students ask for another quiz? Probably never. Part III will demonstrate the methods that Mrs. Lutterman effectively uses in her classroom to garner these results, but for now we will examine the harm caused by incentives and bribes. If teachers admit to their students that they know students will not complete academic work without a bribe, we are in trouble. Big trouble. "The less we use external, or extrinsic, rewards on our children, the more they will engage in their education for the sake and love of learning" (Lahey, 2015, p.22).

Referring to Jesus' parable of the house on the sand or the rock, it seems to me that incentives signify the sand and intrinsic motivation represents the rock. If the house symbolizes the process of learning and it rests on sand, no matter what technology we invent, the house will crumble. We want and need students to give 100% effort and receive great joy from the learning. The rock is the intrinsic motivation students bring with them to kindergarten; our job is to protect this rock and not allow it to be ground it into the sand of incentives.

In my workshops and keynotes I often ask people to agree in a small group how many incentives students receive per day in their school. The most common agreement is 5 per day, but it can range anywhere from 2 to 20 per day. Assume a group agreed that students receive five incentives per day. Five multiplied by 180 school days in a year, multiplied by 13 years, totals 11,700 incentives over one academic career. Even though students receive over 10,000 incentives, we know that simultaneously students are losing their love of school at astronomical rates. The end result is only five to eight percent of high school seniors invest in school because they love to learn. If incentives worked, this book would be unnecessary.

A teacher approached me during a break in a workshop and shared a family story. In November she and her husband asked their teenage daughter and son what they received 11 months earlier for the prior Christmas. Neither could remember even one gift. The parents remembered how much both children begged and pleaded for each gift. Each child layered reason after reason as to why they had to have "these" gifts. But 11 months later, neither child could identify even one of the Christmas gifts from the previous year. So the parents said, "There will be no gifts this Christmas; we are going to spend the money on a vacation you will never

forget." It worked. The trip was a success. The family now invests their money into memorable experiences, instead of trivial trinkets that are quickly forgotten.

The same is true for the incentives used in our schools. Between the stickers, bulletin board recognition, paper certificates, assemblies, pizza parties, extra recesses and everything else teachers are trying: students are not becoming better learners and are not enjoying the learning process. They do not even remember most of the 11,700 incentives that have been tossed their way. Instead, they cram enough in their memory to get them to the next reward, and then dump that information out along with whatever reward they just received. For the very few students who actually remember some of the incentives they did receive, most admit that the only reason they did their work was to get the reward, not to get the knowledge. We are missing the mark big time.

Not only do students not remember our incentives, but incentives create an urge to defy as recorded by Deci and Faste "Self-motivation, rather than external motivation, is at the heart of creativity, responsibility, healthy behavior, and lasting change. External cunning or pressure can sometimes bring about compliance, but with compliance comes various negative consequences, including the urge to defy." (Deci and Flaste, 1995, p.9) This defiance is sometimes quiet rebellion and other times just plain doing the opposite of what the teacher is requesting. It can look like a student quietly drawing an ugly picture of the teacher but far more often it manifests as visible, auditory classroom disruption. The end result is a frustrated teacher and a student labeled "problem student." If however, students are given the opportunity to learn subjects that intrigue them and touch on the very core of who they are, intrinsic motivation drives them to

seek deeper into that knowledge. The energy placed into defiance is now turned into determination, and a determined student does not need an incentive.

Incentives do not encourage self-motivation. They are simply a bribe to complete a task. Once the task is completed and the incentive is received, both parties (the briber and the recipient) move on without forming a meaningful attachment to the process or the material. Our students are not developing the skill of self-motivation. They require more and more incentives to do menial tasks and have less appreciation for the value of hard-work. Teachers are left with the pressure of trying to entice students with fancier trinkets or more impressive reward systems. We want students to learn for their own well-being and success. Our world needs motivated world changers, instead of languid, adults who take their education for granted.

It is well documented that incentives work only in the short term. “Try to encourage a kid to learn math by paying her for each workbook page she completes– and she’ll almost certainly become diligent in the short term and lose interest in math in the long term” (Pink, 2009, p.39). Incentives do not encourage determination, persistence, or a work-ethic. In the long term students are entering into higher education and the work force lacking these valuable attributes. “These children of praise have now entered the workforce, and sure enough, many can’t function without getting a sticker for their every move” (Dweck, 2006, p.136). This increased need for praise and incentives is exhausting on employers and failing out future generations. Who knew so much was riding on the way our students are taught in school?

People have in simple terms, three assets: personality, power and knowledge. In education, teachers immediately have 20-30 direct reports. Sometimes society wants to

downplay the responsibility because the students are young. I don't. There are still 20-30 human beings reporting to one other human being. It is tough. Beginning teachers start out their profession thinking their personality will solve most student issues. Personality rarely wins over all those students. The beginning teachers think, "Now what?" Two other assets are available – power and knowledge. Well, beginning teachers don't have the knowledge yet to lead so many learners, so power is their last option. Bribes are the power tool most often selected by teachers. Bribes are familiar from their own educational experience. They experienced being bribed as students and watched theachers bribe their students during their student teaching training. Bribes are an easy tool and a quick fix, but they are not the correct tool for the job. We need to invest in building knowledge in our teachers so that they are prepared to lead their classrooms. The aim of *How to Create a Perfect School* is to greatly increase knowledge in educators. I want teachers to have the expertise to always put knowledge first because "Rewards can perform a weird sort of behavioral alchemy: They can transform an interesting task into a drudge. They can turn play into work. And by diminishing intrinsic motivation, they can send performance, creativity, and even upstanding behavior toppling like dominoes" (Pink, 2009, p. 37).

We need to reorder the use of these three assets teachers bring into their classrooms. Knowledge first, personality second and then power on rare occasions. With knowledge, many teachers, like Rachel Lutterman, can preserve intrinsic motivation as her students hunger for new all-time-bests by building new concepts upon existing knowledge. The last thing we want are experienced teachers continuing to rely upon power as their #1 tool.

Rewards perform a weird sort of behavioral alchemy: They can transform an interesting task into a drudge. They can turn play into work. Rewards diminish intrinsic motivation. They can send performance, creativity, and even upstanding behavior toppling like dominoes.

Chapter 9

"You Mean We Have to Know This, Like Forever?!!"

We want our schools to be more effective with more students than ever before. (Bryk, 2015)

The valedictorian sauntered up to the podium as the applause thundered. His family, friends, teachers and principal eagerly awaited for him to share how he got to this place in his life. After thirteen years of school, he outperformed all of his peers to win his spot at the microphone and bragging rights for his college application. He cleared his throat and leaned into the microphone.

"I am not the smartest student in this high school. I'm not the best at studying and I can't remember what I learned three years ago when I first started at this school. To be honest, I can's even tell you what was on our finals last month. I can tell you what I am I am the very best student in this school at cramming. I know how to cram, receive my "A," and dump all of the information out of my brain to make room to cram for the next test. I am not the smartest here; I am just the best at cramming.

No educator wants to hear that speech. No educator wants to admit that they already know this is happening in their classroom. I personally sat through approximately 1000 teacher interviews in my career. During these interviews, I never heard a candidate say they wanted to become a teacher to help students learn how to cram and forget so they could be passed along to the next teacher unprepared and unmotivated. Not once. These teacher candidates express how much they love watching the "light bulb" flip on in students' heads when they finally understood

a difficult concept. They had a passion for helping students learn, remember and easily recall information; the system they are hired into is not for recall and remembering.

It was in November several years ago that a Kentucky grade 1 teacher heard me speak about the LtoJ® process that removes cramming from school and replaces it with a more effective learning method. Students are taught how to transfer knowledge into their long-term memory and recall it frequently. By December, the teacher changed her spelling process. Previously students in her class were assigned weekly spelling words on Monday, glanced at the words occasionally throughout the week, crammed on Thursday night in order to spell the words correctly on Friday and by Saturday, they had forgotten the words. When asked about the previous week's spelling words, her students stared at her blankly. One of her students exclaimed, "You mean we have to know how to spell these words, like forever?!!" The answer was yes, but they did not know how to learn in terms of forever. Like their teacher, they needed to learn in a new way to, well, forever.

First grade marks the initiation into the "Cram it and forget it" club for students. These young scholars do not enter school knowing this club exists, but after a few weeks of experiencing spelling tests, first graders figure out they are not going to be retested on these words, so they do not have to store them long term. No teacher tells their students they only need to know the words for Friday and then they can forget them. However, these kids are smart and in about a month they have the process down pat. That is why this Kentucky grade 1 student was so astonished. He learned how to cram in September and now in December he was flabbergasted with the change.

By this point you may be thinking, “Well Lee, I can see your point, but I send my child to a private school. Things are different there.” Not so fast. My wife and I were visiting family college friends who happened to have their grandchildren visiting at the same time. They attended a private Protestant Christian School.

About halfway through our visit, our friend asked their granddaughter to sing for us. She quickly agreed. As she was standing before us ready to sing, her Grandma asked her to share the Bible verse she recently learned at school. Her granddaughter replied, “I don’t remember that; it was just for a test.” Grandma looked at me and said, “Well, Lee, that’s what you have been saying: all that time and money, and she doesn’t remember a simple Bible verse.”

The singing was beautiful. Not a word or note forgotten. The memory verses, however, were forgotten just like the spelling words from the earlier example. Singing interested the young girl and drove her to know and understand the music. The memory verses did not have the same effect. The same methods of cram and forget and still encouraged and the results are exactly the same as public schools.

Approximately 80% of my work is in public schools, 10% in charter schools and 10% in Christian schools. I state this because students have permission to forget in all types of educational experiences. The cram/forget habit is everywhere shared by everyone. The following quotations by education professionals illustrate this truth.

In high school students ask, “Do we have to know this for the test? What they are asking for is permission to forget” (Thompson, p. 67).

"If academically oriented experiences are not stored in permanent memory, they are not added to academic background knowledge" (Marzano, p.21).

"Too many children and adolescents experience vocabulary instruction as making passing acquaintances with a wide range of words. They know that many of the words won't be used again, and that next week there will be a new list" (Fisher, Frey, and Hattie, 2016, p.49).

"It seems that when people learn with the expectation of being evaluated, they focus on memorizing facts, but they don't process the information as fully, so they don't grasp the concepts as well…those who had learned expecting to be tested had forgotten much more…Evidently, they memorized the material for the test, and when the test was over, they pulled the plug and let it drain out" (Deci, 1995, p.48).

Fisher, Frey, Hattie and Deci comment on this problem without specifying that the problem is nation-wide. They do not have to make this specification because the problem is all too common. How can we ever have more effective schools, if we continue to insist that the cram and forget method is the best or only method and ignore that it is not producing favorable results? The answer is, you cannot have more effective schools using this method. Many have tried and almost all have failed. Cramming and dumping knowledge is not an effective method for learning.

Maybe, there are some students who love cramming knowing full well they will soon forget the crammed content. I have yet to meet them. On our Will & Thrill Matrix the highest feedback a student can score is a "5" for 100% effort at cramming, but hating the fake learning process.

University professors often complain about the lack of knowledge possessed by their incoming freshmen. The high school teachers complain about the lack of knowledge of their incoming freshmen. The middle school teachers complain about the lack of knowledge of their grade 6 students. The intermediate teachers in grades 3,4 and 5 complain about the lack of knowledge coming into grade 3. That is a lot of complaining and very little being done about the fact that very few of our students are adequately learning regardless of who is to blame.

The university professors use the same cram/forget process as high school teachers. The high school teachers use the same cram/forget process as the middle school teachers. The middle school teachers use the same cram/forget process as the elementary teachers in grades 1-5. Somehow, someway we need to stop the blame game and realize all levels of education are victims of the same sequence of cram/get-a-grade/forget mentality. It is possible to change these patterns if educators take the time to learn new habits. Habits that not only empower our teachers, but engage our students and produce incredible results. Habits that lead to 5.9 times higher learning retention and produce students eager to learn and remember. It is not a far-off dream. It can be very much a reality when the methods used in the LtoJ® process are implemented and the cram and forget method is left caged in the past.

Chapter 10

What Percent of Our Students Feel Dumb?

Nobody ever gets used to feeling dumb. (Dweck, 2006)

In, my first book on the education system, *Improving Student Learning: Applying Deming's Principles in Classrooms,* I quoted a grandfather who attended a Springfield, Missouri awards assembly. Here is what he wrote to the editor:

"This morning I took time off from work to attend the first-grade awards ceremony at my grandson's school. I did this because I am a good grandparent and because I feel some responsibility as a fellow teacher to support his colleagues. Of some 100 shiny-faced, freshly scrubbed soon-to-be-second graders, the same 15 students were invited onstage time and time again to receive awards in art, spelling, physical education, reading, and so on. After the awards were presented in each area, the small group of winning students lined up in front of the stage to face the audience and bask briefly in the cheers and applause.

"By the end of the presentation, I had seen those children and heard their names so often I felt as though I knew them.

"After the awards were given out, all the remaining first-graders were marched briskly across the stage to accept their completion certificates and return to their seats with no time for any recognition from the audience. This was done without fanfare. The lady next to me said of her daughter, 'They are breaking her heart.' The man on the other side replied, 'We send them here to learn so early that they are not valuable.'

"Next year, I will take my grandson fishing on awards day. His teacher will say, 'That family just doesn't care,' or 'No wonder he is not doing any better.' "We do care. I just don't watch him hurt again." (B.Thomas quoted in Jenkins, 2003) "Nobody Ever Gets Used to Feeling Dumb" Dweck, 2006, p.219).

The grandfather in the above story makes a key statement, "We do care. I just don't want to watch him get hurt again." Even in first-grade, students are painfully aware of who the winners are and who the losers are in their class. They know if they measure up because it is reinforced again and again. If they measure up, they get the awards, move their name across the bulletin board and receive praise. But if they do not measure up, well then they must be dumb. Once this feeling of being dumb is reinforced a multiple number of times, the discouragement that sets in on the student will almost always stay that way.

For whatever reason, we believe that the kids who do not receive the honors are really happy for the honored kids and will work really hard to be one of the honored next time. When we write that logic out, it sounds pretty stupid, doesn't it?

Every time I hear the word "stupid" I cannot help but remember an event several years ago when my 3-year old grandson informed us that he needed to go potty. So, being the helpful grandpa that I am, I volunteered. Unfortunately, there was not a urinal in the restroom. No problem. I put the toilet seat back against the tank and lifted up grandson to relieve himself. All was going according to plan until the toilet seat fell down and hit grandson on the head. While consoling a crying, peeing grandson, I said, "That stupid toilet seat!!" We finished our business, dried his tears and returned my grandson to his parents.

It was then that my grandson exclaimed, “Grandpa said a bad word.” My wife Sandy looked at me and in a sweet, but firm tone said, “Lee, what did you say?” I looked bewildered and innocent. Then my grandson enthusiastically continued to tattle on me, “Grandpa said stupid.” It was then that daughter-in-law explained that they were trying to get their son to stop saying stupid about everything. My wife and I relaxed and had a good laugh about everything except maybe the sore head.

I can hear the critics contesting my opinions. They may argue that kids need to learn how to lose. We need competition; that is what made us great. I hope my responses sticks in the minds of readers for the rest of their lives.

A. Children do need to learn about competition. They learn this best in games and sports. We want children to learn how to be good losers and how to be good winners. In a game of Yahtzee with 4 players, we have 3 losers and 1 winner. The loss is not damaging to the self-concept. The pain is minimal and can soon be replaced with a win during the next competition. With academic losses, the pain can be there for a lifetime. The student with 1 sticker after his name compared to other students with 8 stickers is not going to win. We might as well tattoo “loser” on him.

B. We can have only winners in academic learning. No parent sends their children to school to be a loser. How can all children be winners? Because, in the words of John Maxwell, we want kids to think, “I only want to be better than my former self.” Principal Diane Benito wrote, “Students are able to visually see this growth by becoming involved with the graphing. I love how it changes their mindset from *how many I got wrong* to, *I know more than I have ever known before*!”

In an environment where students are continually recognized for (1) personally doing better than ever before and (2) students know they contributed to the success of the team, students learn cooperation. In an environment where adults are mature, children learn to enjoy the games whether they win or lose. In both games and academic environments we want students to give great effort and to receive great joy because they are enjoying the process, not seeking empty glory.

Chapter 11

Homework is NOT a School Subject

Attention needs to move from how to teach to how to learn. (Hattie, 2012)

Homework is a commonly used method for helping students learn. At times homework is a positive tool; often it is a negative. Some families love homework and others resent teachers telling them how to spend their family time in the evenings. Sometimes homework is merely busy work hastily assigned at the last minute because of a board policy on homework. Sometimes it prepares students very well for an upcoming Advanced Placement exam. Whatever the reason, feeling, or policy regarding homework, we must agree that homework is not a school subject and does not guarantee academic success.

Homework can take many different forms. Reading assignments, group or individual projects, book reports, research papers, test preparation, and chapter questions, all fall into the category of "homework." In this chapter, we will be referring mainly to the daily assignments that are sent home with one day to complete as homework.

In my years of interviewing teacher candidates, the answer, "I want to be a homework monitor," was never given in response to the question, "Why do you want to be a teacher?" Sadly, far too many professionals, with the official title of "teacher" are becoming homework monitors. A majority of the instructional time in too many middle and high school classrooms is consumed trading papers for scoring, arguing about correctness of certain answers, teaching the content missed by a few students. Teachers spend hours upon unpaid hours grading homework instead of investing time preparing engaging experiences for actual course content. The

enthusiasm teachers begin their career with is quickly sucked away with the nightly chore of scoring papers. This reality, paired with the very high percentage of homework that is actually copied homework, is truly a waste of energy, talent and time.

What do teachers desire? They want the content of their course to be placed in students' long-term memory. They want the surface learning to be instantly recalled when needed for deep learning problems and they want their students to be able to transfer both surface and deep learning to new situations inside and outside of school. None of these goals are effectively accomplished when homework overpowers course content and subject exploration.

I have purposely ended each part of this book with a chapter for parents. Teachers really do need parents on their side. Grading practices are a major deterrent to this partnership. Complicated scoring systems, intricate requirements and nonsense assignments lead parents into the dark when trying to understand their child's homework. I heard about the very intelligent student receiving a "C" on the report card even though the grades on all exams were "A." How does this happen? Homework is almost always the culprit. When a student receives twenty zeros on homework assignments along with 4 "A's" on exams, the result is a "C" at best. How does any student keep their will and thrill for learning when they prove on the exams they learned the content, but refused to use the approved method (homework) to learn? Couple this with the fact that a majority of the secondary students who received credit for turning in homework copied it from a classmate and you can imagine why parents struggle with supporting homework. Homework does not indicate a child's level of intelligence, just their level of obedience.

Many parents determine if a teacher or school is acceptable based on the amount of homework assigned. When teachers choose not to assign homework, you can bet there is pushback from parents. After all, that is what they did when they were in school. This misinformed view of homework deceives parents into thinking that the daily work their student brings home begrudgingly is an effective learning tool. In actuality, assignming more or less homework has little to do with student learning and knowledge retention. It may even lead to lower academic performance because it often crushes student will and thrill, exactly what we're trying to stop from happening.

In chapter 4 I shared a way to gain accurate data from students. The same method can be used to answer questions about how students feel about the effectiveness of homework. Ask students to write down the names of ten friends and tell them you are going to ask them questions about homework. Let them know that you will NOT be collecting the names of the students; you only want numbers.

A. How many of your ten friends copy daily homework?
B. How many of your friends say they learn a lot from homework?
C. How many of your friends think daily homework is only busywork; it is not helpful
D. How many of your friends think homework should be a part of the grade?

Our students and parents must understand our goal is for students to learn; the method is far less important than learning. Further, we desire for students to exhibit effort and joy in the learning process. Once the data from your social survey is collected, create a quick graph on the whiteboard showing the number of F's, D's, C's, B's and A's on the last exam. Allow the

students to agree on a method, other than homework, to decrease the D's and F's and increase the B's and A's. Allow students to establish a hypothesis to test. If the tested hypothesis does not result in improved learning, call another class meeting to establish a new hypothesis. For some students, homework may be a necessity. For others, it may only be busy work. The key is to find which methods work for each student.

Homework is the symptom of an underlying problem. The underlying problem focuses more on the method than the learning. There is no method ever invented that works for 100% of the students. None. Not all kids learn from the new high-tech $5 million dollar software system. Not all kids learn to read with phonics. Not all kids learn with educational games. Not all students learn from the handwritten comments on their papers. And not all learn from homework.

We should not try to find the method that works for everyone. What we want is an environment where students give us 100% effort and receive great joy along the way. When this is accomplished, students arrive to class motivated to absorb the material and actively participate in their learning. When will and thrill are in place student learning will exceed beyond expectation. Educators should not relax on standards for learning, but should relax on methods. Who really cares by what method the students place the content in their long-term memory?

* I know readers may doubt the word "majority" in the earlier sentence. I encourage you to do your own research asking high school relatives and family friends. Do not ask these students if they copy homework, instead ask, "In a class of 20-25 students how many of them copy homework instead of doing it themselves?")

Chapter 12

Imperfect for Parents

As the third monthly kindergarten meeting began Mrs. Haney waited for the parents' chatter to quiet down. She cleared her throat and began, "The responsibility of unions is to represent the people who pay their dues. Police unions represent police, pilot unions represent pilots, and teacher unions represent teachers. Students do not have unions; they have parents.

"All parents have a responsibility to represent their children, but how they represent and advocate for their children can differ greatly. At one end of the spectrum are parents who always take the side of their child – no matter what the situation. Even further they are available daily to solve every minor problem, quickly absorbing any consequences or responsibilities away from the child. In the United States of America we call these types of parents "helicopter parents" because they are always hovering over the child. In Scandinavian countries they are called sweeper parents after the sport of curling – always sweeping away any and all irritations the child might encounter.These are the parents most inclined to continually praise their child. Remember what we talked about last month: "Praising children's intelligence harms their motivation and it harms their performance" (Dweck, 2006, p.175).

"On the other end of the spectrum are the parents who believe the school personnel are always right. They tell their children to just deal with the problem. Lee Jenkins tells the story of his father who camped out toward the end of this spectrum. This wasn't always true, but he was more in that direction rather than being a helicopter parent to his children.

"When Lee came home from school complaining that he was punished unjustly for something, his father asked him if he could think of anything he did wrong the past couple weeks for which he did not get caught. Lee could always answer, 'Well, yes, I guess so.' His father would then come back with, 'Well, just take the punishment for the wrong doing you didn't get caught for.' Lee still remembers years later how much he hated that sequence of questions and answers. Educators know that we are not always right and proving we are right is not our goal. We want to partner with you on your child's educational journey.

"Finally, there are the parents who need a wake-up call from thinking his/her child is always right. There is the story about a student sent to the principal's office for breaking a rule. She admitted to the principal that she broke the rules. So, the principal informed the student that he would be calling her mom. The student strongly reminded the principal how much her mom hated being called at work saying, 'Go ahead and call my mom. I will deny I broke the rules. My mom always believes me.'

"Without missing a beat, the principal nodded and excused the student from his office for a moment. He proceeded to call her mom at work and tell her that he was bringing her daughter into the office. The phone would be on speaker phone without her daughter's knowledge. He asked her to be silent and to just listen to the conversation. Once the mother agreed, he called the student back into his office and continued their conversation.

Principal: Now, where did we leave off? Oh, I remember you admitted you stole a dollar out of a student's backpack.

Daughter: Yes, that's right. I took the dollar.

Principal: Then I told you I need to call your mother.

Daughter: I told you how much my mother hates being called at work. Besides, I will tell her I didn't take the dollar.

Mom: (A voice booming out of the speaker phone) Young lady, meet me at the curb by the fire hydrant in front of the school!. I will be there in five minutes!!

"So, parents, what criteria can we use to navigate the tricky space between the parent/child are always right and the teacher/school are always right? Understand that I am not talking about serious issues that need to be investigated. I am talking about the normal ups and downs that naturally occur with 500 people inside the same space. These issues include minor behavior infractions, disagreements with peers or teachers, and other character building opportunities.

"Sometimes it is hard to know when to intervene and when to let our students learn from their challenges. Here is how I determine whether or not I should intervene when I receive concerns from students or parents: First I ask myself if the stated problem is unique to an individual or has applications to many more, if not all students. Very often parents see issues of which I am not aware. These practices have the potential to harm many students, not only the particular student in question. If the problem is unique to a particular student, then my mind will think of unique, personal solutions versus school-wide discussions.

"My hope, parents, is that you let your children deal with most of the bumps and bruises of schooling. School provides an opportunity for children to work through social/emotional challenges. It encourages them to become confident problem solvers and independent thinkers. They will fail a lot, but those failures will lead to great joy when they do succeed. Please do not

rob your child of this great joy by solving all of their problems in order to protect them from failing. Do let us know if a major problem arises and we will partner with you to create solutions.

Beyond that, what I most hope for is that we work together to fix the system that causes most students to lose their interest in school learning. That is the major issue that affects every student. Deming wrote, “We conclude that until there is a consensus on student performance among educators and parents, individual schools will find it extremely difficult to improve the quality of instruction” (Deming, 1994, p.?). Regardless of the type of representation that you lean toward for your student, please find a healthy balance between your student is always right, and the system is always right. Neither of these statements are one hundred percent true. Both are capable of failure which is why we need a well-structured middle ground when representing our students.

“In our upcoming monthly meetings I will outline the practices that have been around for generations that are responsible for much of the decline of intrinsic motivation in students. Then on a tour of our school I will share with you first-hand what our teachers are doing to eliminate these problems. You will have the opportunity to observe the power of intrinsic motivation in action. We are making great strides towards changing the education system and I am excited for you each to see what we are doing.

“In the future, if you find that your child is struggling or that their motivation seems to be dwindling, please reach out and talk to their teacher or to me. Our hope is to provide you with guidance in order to create an educational system that works for all students, not a handful of students. We are fighting against decades of bad practices which means that it is going to take

some time, and lots of communication. We need to hear from you when things are working and when things are not working. We cannot fix what is not working if we do not know about it.

"Lee Jenkins shares another story about a summer day when he was a school superintendent. This is an example of a problem unique to an individual student. A parent called about her formerly eager-to-learn son who now hated school. Through tears, she shared that her son was very bright, but something was drastically wrong.

As Lee listened to the distraught mother explain the history of her son's loss of effort and joy, he became convinced that she was correct. Something was wrong. It came to light, in the words of her son, "I will be starting grade 5 in September, but I should be going into grade 6." Her son had been retained in grade 1 and had become painfully aware that he was not with his friends or peer group. He was reminded every day that back in grade 1 he had not made the cut. Dr. Jenkins suggested the student skip grade 5 and be restored to his age grouping.

Seven years later, Lee received a thank your letter from that same mother, telling him her son recently graduated high school. From the day he entered grade 6 with his original peer group, he was a different child. She was convinced that if they had not reversed the grade 1 retention he never would have graduated. She saw her son's passion for learning return and was so grateful she chose to speak up.

"I relate this story because it was the parent's attitude that set the stage for an unusual solution. The parent did not blame any of the people in the school district. She merely said we have a problem, this is not normal, and can you offer any help in this situation? It was the teamwork between the mother, the superintendent and the child that created the solution. No

blaming necessary. This is my hope for us. We can bring about change, teamwork and creative problem solvint to ensure that all of our students enter and leave school excited to learn.

"Thank you for spending part of your morning with me. On your way out is a document outlining four of the normal procedures used in schools that douse the flame of intrinsic motivation in students. The procedures include: keeping the year-long learning expectations a secret, using charts that publicly embarrass students, encouraging students to cram and forget, and placing too much of a focus on one method to learn (homework, for example) over the actual learning of the year-long content. As you read, I hope to spark your curiosity. I think it will help you to truly appreciate the replacements for each of these four procedures as we tour classrooms during our next monthly meeting. I am excited to hear your input.