Introduction

What Is Your Current Wayside Teaching Profile?

An individual teacher is the single most influential factor within a school. While those of us who teach know this intuitively, to have it substantiated in study after study (Marzano, 2007) is both validating and intimidating—validating because teaching is work we love, and intimidating because we all know we can do it better. Wayside teaching—making the most of sometimes seemingly inconsequential connections with kids—is a means of optimizing our influence as teachers.

Teachers are servants of the people, givers, accommodators, putting-other-people-first kind of folks. We are busy. We fit students and the school day in with family, church and community activities, and perhaps a second job. We often don't have time to analyze ourselves, our abilities, our inclinations. Nor do we often have time to read about, and reflect on, ways to improve our effectiveness.

You are about to have the opportunity to complete a self-analysis (Figure I.1). It's vital that you take the time to thoughtfully respond to each item. This self-analysis will activate your prior knowledge and experiences. Teachers know how important both are to the learning process. You will not have to talk with anyone about your responses. They are personal and, therefore, hopefully honest. They will help you reflect on this book's message. Remember that "it is what teachers think, what teachers believe, and what teachers do at the level of the classroom that ultimately shapes the kind of learning that young people get" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992, p. 11).

What you experience in the self-analysis and read about in this book may resonate strongly with your current practice. If that's the case, then my hope is that your wayside teaching attitudes, approaches, and actions will be *affirmed* and strengthened. I hope that those of you who are encouraged by this book to give more thought to relationships and who have a desire to learn more about how to use the power of your presence more effectively will want to *augment* your practices after reading about the many possibilities of wayside teaching. If for you teaching is all about content, and considering the whole child or adolescent as part of the equation of optimal learning is a new concept, then you may want to use what you are about to read to *anchor* your attitudes, approaches, and actions in a new sea of possibilities. Regardless of whether you *affirm, augment,* or *anchor* regarding wayside teaching, welcome to the adventure!

The teacher self-analysis is divided into two sections, each with its own set of descriptors indicated by numbers 1 through 5. Read each statement and determine which descriptor best fits what you believe in the *Attitude and Approach Self-Analysis* and what you actually do in the *Action Self-Analysis*. Remember, this is not a wish list of where you want to be but rather an honest appraisal of where you are now. Directions for how to graphically represent your Wayside Teaching Profile follow the self-analysis.

Figure I.1   Teacher Self-Analysis

For each item, choose a descriptor that best suits you. Place the number of the descriptor in the blank before the item.

Attitude and Approach Self-Analysis

5—strongly agree

4—agree

3—ambivalent

2—disagree

1—strongly disagree

_____It is important to know my students well.

_____It is important for me to know the names of all my students within the first week of school.

_____It is important to view my students as whole children or adolescents.

_____Building relationships with students is vital to their growth in my classroom.

_____Knowing about my students' families and home lives increases my teaching effectiveness.

_____Using student learning styles to plan instruction increases my teaching effectiveness.

_____Assigning students to groups based on either similar or divergent interests makes for productive and interesting cooperative learning.

_____Knowing my students' previous achievement patterns helps me meet their needs.

_____Speaking warmly to students in the hallway is important.

_____Attending student events helps build student-teacher relationships.

_____Appropriately sharing aspects of my personal life with my students enhances student-teacher relationships.

_____The physical environment of my classroom makes a difference in my students' attitudes toward learning.

_____I believe that all my students can learn, regardless of their race, ethnicity, and cultural differences.

_____I believe that accepting students will foster their own self-acceptance.

_____One of my teaching responsibilities is to be a role model.

_____Service-learning projects are beneficial to student growth.

_____It is important to help students discover who they are and what they believe.

_____Giving students choices builds personal responsibility and allows for individual expression through decision making.

_____Through authentic, meaningful writing experiences students find their voice.

_____Nonverbal signs of listening are important.

_____I believe that students pay close attention to my every word and action.

_____My grammar (correct or not) influences my students.

_____I believe that personally directed sarcasm has no place in my classroom.

Figure I.1 (Continued)

_____I value conversations with students.

_____I believe it is important for students to become independent learners.

_____Students benefit from active engagement in clubs, afterschool programs, and intramural activities.

_____I believe it is important for students to build legitimate self-esteem.

_____It is important to make sure every student is successful at something as often as possible.

_____I believe that recognizing talents, interests, and glimmers of creativity may lead my students to discovering their lifelong passions.

_____I believe that humor in the classroom may help kids connect with us, with each other, and even with the curriculum.

_____
(sum)

Action Self-Analysis

5—almost always

4—often

3—sometimes

2—almost never

1—never

_____I make a point to get to know my students.

_____I know my students' names within the first week of school.

_____I use my students' names in both class discussions and casual contact.

_____I practice empathy in the classroom.

_____I am familiar with the neighborhoods where my students live.

_____I am familiar with my students' home lives and families.

_____I use what I know about my students' learning styles to plan instructional strategies.

_____I contact my students before school starts to tell them I'm happy they will be in my class.

_____I stand at my classroom door between classes to greet students.

_____I purposefully go where students are during the school day to interact with them.

_____I participate actively in school events, not just show up.

_____I share parts of my personal life with students.

_____I am 100% present in my classroom, being careful to not let my personal problems interfere with my teaching.

_____I create and maintain a pleasant, interesting classroom environment.

_____I am sensitive to the personal, physical needs of my students.

_____I actively listen to my students and value what they have to say.

_____I show genuine compassion toward students and others inside and outside the classroom.

_____I accept students for who they are, not because of what they do or don't do.

_____I find ways for my students to work together that foster a sense of connectedness among my students.

_____I have my students read books and stories in class that show what acceptance and compassion look like.

_____I provide opportunities for my students to give to the community through service.

_____I give students a variety of opportunities to exercise choice in my classroom.

_____I give students opportunities to sort out their opinions and beliefs.

_____I prompt students to reflect on classroom experiences.

_____I provide opportunities for students to find and express their authentic voices.

_____I make eye contact and acknowledge what is said when my students speak.

_____I purposefully speak in grammatically correct ways with students.

_____I am careful to not speak sarcastically to students.

_____I purposefully balance the number of times I call on boys and girls for classroom responses.

_____I intervene in situations of cruelty, bullying, inappropriate advances, and sexual harassment.

_____I avoid using a red pen to correct student work.

_____I have real conversations with students.

_____I provide opportunities for my students to become independent learners.

_____I help create opportunities for students to explore their interests and abilities through such avenues as clubs and intramural activities.

Figure I.1 (Continued)

_____ I develop ways for students to assist other students through activities such as peer tutoring.

_____ I consciously look for opportunities to help kids build resiliency.

_____ I create opportunities for students to succeed and support their efforts to build self-esteem.

_____ I make sure every student is successful at something.

_____ I utilize methods of recognizing talents, deep interest in a subject or topic, and glimmers of creativity in my students.

_____ I infuse humor into my classroom.

_____
(sum)

Now let's take the results of your honest and thoughtful responses to the self-analysis items and represent them graphically. Follow the simple directions to plot your personal Wayside Teaching Profile.

## GRAPHIC VIEW OF YOUR CURRENT WAYSIDE TEACHING PROFILE

Take a minute to study the sample grid on the next page to understand how to plot your own Wayside Teaching Profile. The diagonal indicates a healthy mix of *attitude, approach,* and *action.* It points in a positive direction. If your attitudes and approaches are at the same level as your actions in your Wayside Teaching Profile, your profile will fall on or near this line. If your attitudes and approaches more closely align with wayside teaching than your actions, your profile will fall below the diagonal. This is the most likely scenario since most of us believe and know more about wayside teaching practices than we actually implement.

Here's how Margaret plotted her profile on the grid once she completed the self-analysis (Figure I.2). First she added her points in the Attitude and Approach section and got a sum of 133. Then she divided by 30, the number of items in this section. She rounded to the nearest tenth and plotted her average of 4.4 on the Attitude and Approach axis. Then Margaret added her points in the Action section and got a sum of 129. Then she divided the sum by 40, the

number of items in that section. She rounded to the nearest tenth and plotted her average of 3.2 on the Action axis. Then she drew a line *up* from her 4.4 plot on the Attitude and Approach axis and a line to the *right* of her 3.2 plot on the Action axis. The point where these two lines meet is Margaret's Wayside Teaching Profile, point P. This plot illustrates that Margaret already has strong wayside teaching attitudes and approaches, with wayside teaching actions not far behind.

Figure I.2   Margaret's Wayside Teaching Profile
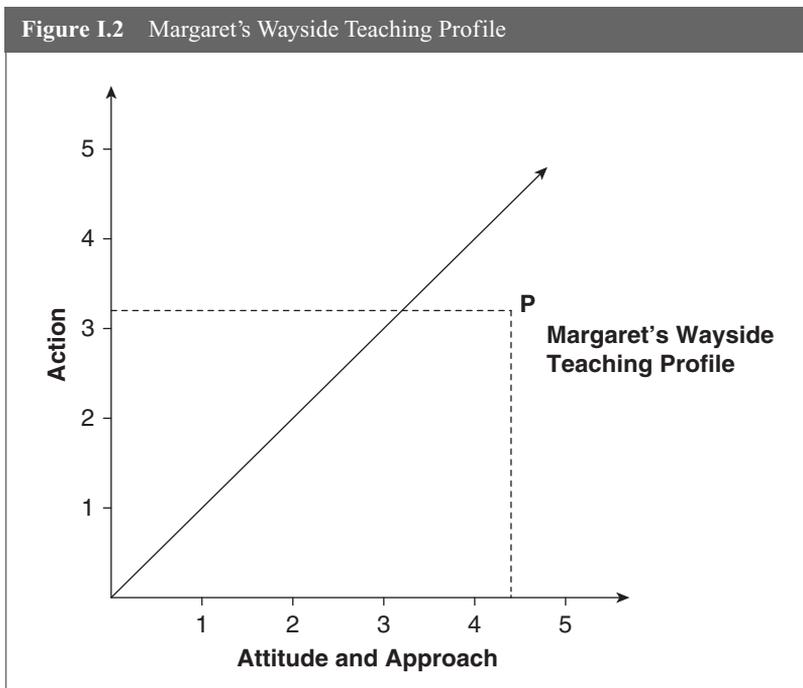
Add the numbers in the blanks in the Attitude and Approach section and divide by 30. Round to the nearest tenth. This is the number you will plot on the Attitude and Approach axis on page 8 (Figure I.3). Now add the numbers in the blanks in the Action section and divide by 40. Round to the nearest tenth. This is the number you will plot on the Action axis. Draw a line up from your point on the Attitude and Approach axis and a line to the right from your point on the Action axis. The intersection of these two lines is your Wayside Teaching Profile.

Figure I.3   My Wayside Teaching Profile
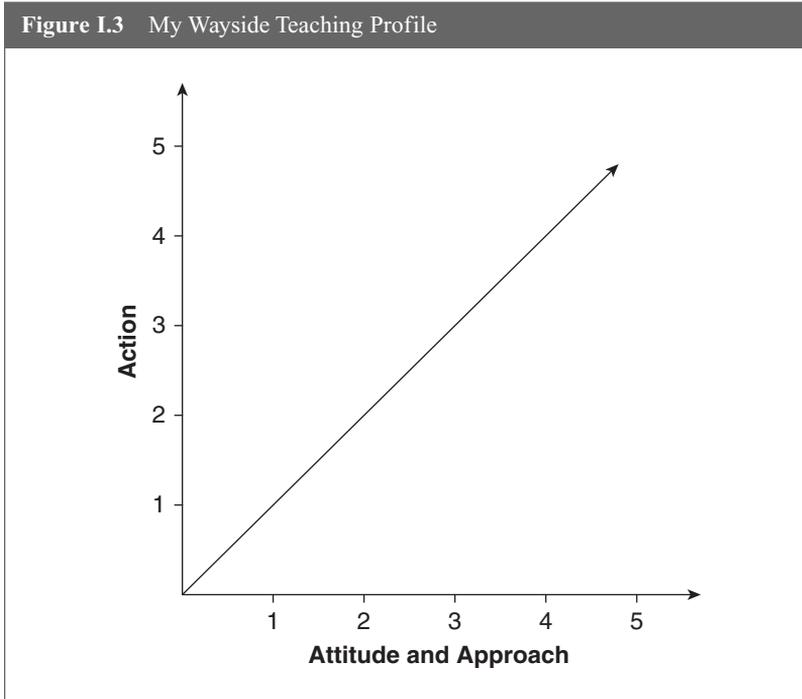
By responding to the self-analysis, you have a pretty good idea of where this book is heading. You have a picture of where you are in relation to wayside teaching. You have also activated your prior knowledge and experiences, making what follows even more meaningful to you.

In this book there's an entire chapter on what wayside teaching is and why it's important. The concept is as old as relationships themselves, but to give what this book is about a *name* and a *definition* may be new to you. The phrase *wayside teaching* was coined by John Lounsbury, one of our most respected and influential educators and thinkers regarding young adolescents and middle grades education. In the May 1987 editor's column of *Middle School Journal,* and then repeated in his 1991 book *As I See It,* he defined wayside teaching as "the teaching that is done between classes, when walking in the halls, after school, and in dozens of one-on-one encounters, however brief" (p. 29). In this book, the concept of wayside teaching is defined in sufficient detail to let us examine the broad range of possibilities and practices inspired by Dr. Lounsbury's definition.

In Chapter 2, we look closely at a dozen components of wayside teaching. You'll recognize the source of the items in the self-analysis as you read Chapter 2. This is the "how to" chapter that most of us look for in any education-related book. The content, however, is not necessarily of the make-and-take variety that I sought during my first few years in the classroom. The "use immediately as a fun and effective add-on" may have contributed a little extra zip to my lessons, but most of the zip of the make-and-take strategies faded pretty quickly when I had trouble figuring out why I did them in the first place. They may have been fun, but with no theory or research to show their value, no connections to student learning, they proved short lived in my repertoire. On the other hand, the value of wayside teaching practices is well documented under a variety of labels. Some of the components in Chapter 2 can be implemented immediately, while others will take time and determination to implement.

In Chapter 3, the 12 components of wayside teaching are tailored for elementary learners; in Chapter 4 the components are tailored for middle-level learners; and in Chapter 5 the components are tailored for high school learners. In Chapter 6, we take an inward look at ourselves and six goals addressing how we might apply the theory and practices of wayside teaching in our own contexts. What do my students need? Are there practices that are more fitting to my personality than others? Are there ways that I might make simple adjustments in my everyday habits so that the power of my presence is better used to positively affect students? It's all very personal—theory meets practice within my style and for the benefit of my kids.

One more thing before we begin. . . . If you are not familiar with Haim Ginott, you will be by the end of this book. This one-time elementary teacher in Israel, turned child psychotherapist with a PhD from Columbia University in New York City, had as his goal for children that they grow up to be decent human beings who practice compassion. Dr. Ginott believed that caring communication, both in speaking and in listening, was the key to creating an emotional climate conducive to teaching and learning. In his brief 51 years of life, he wrote books that both instruct and inspire us. One of his seminal works, *Teacher and Child,* was reprinted in 1993 on the 20th anniversary of his death. Throughout this book, you will find quotes from the writing of Dr. Ginott, the master *wayside teacher*. The following words deserve to be read over and over. Internalize them

as your own. The tremendous power of a teacher to create the classroom climate, to make the weather, is what wayside teaching is all about. Be "frightened" by the words, as Dr. Ginott was, for in our fear we may recognize our responsibility.

> *I've come to a frightening conclusion.*
>
> *I am the decisive element in the classroom.*
>
> *It's my personal approach that creates climate.*
>
> *It's my daily mood that makes the weather.*
>
> *As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power*
>
> *to make a child's life miserable or joyous.*
>
> *I can be a tool of torture*
>
> *or an instrument of inspiration.*
>
> *I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal.*
>
> *In all situations, it is my response that decides*
>
> *whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated,*
>
> *a child humanized or dehumanized.*
>
> —Ginott (1993, p. 15)