

Preface

For many years now, teachers of all levels of experience and in all subject areas have been encouraged to reflect on every aspect of their teaching. Surprisingly, however, one aspect of reflection that has been neglected is classroom communication and how it influences learning, both positively and negatively. Classroom communication differs from everyday communication in that its main purpose is to instruct and inform. A classroom is a small society with its own values, rules, and language, and teachers use language (both verbal and non-verbal) as the main way of communicating with their students for both instructional and social purposes during classroom lessons. Although classroom communication is highly regulated and ritualized, many teachers, students, and administrators seem unaware of the different ways classroom communication provides, or blocks, opportunities for students to reach optimum levels of learning. In addition, teachers may not know how to investigate the different communication patterns that exist in their classrooms. The purpose of *Talking, Listening, and Teaching: A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Communication* is to encourage teachers, students, and administrators to examine and reflect systematically on classroom communication and interaction and their implications for student learning.

This book is designed to serve teachers who are interested in pursuing professional development either alone, with a friend, or in teacher study groups. It can be used as a textbook for inservice teacher development courses as well as for teacher preparation courses in such disciplines as Education, Communication Studies, and Teaching English as a Second Language.

Each of the nine chapters in this book will help teachers systematically uncover various aspects of classroom communication and interaction. Chapter 1 outlines and discusses what classroom communication is and offers an overall framework that teachers can

use to understand classroom communication and interaction. Chapter 2 asks teachers to reflect on how they view their students' competence in classroom communication and interaction, with considerations for gender and communication apprehension, as well as for sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds. Chapter 3 outlines how teachers can investigate classroom communication and shows them how to collect, examine, and analyze classroom communication. Chapter 4 discusses how teachers can organize classroom communication so that their students can participate in classroom activities and events effectively. Chapter 5 examines teachers' use of questions and discusses the characteristics of productive and unproductive questions and how long teachers should wait for answers after asking a question. Chapter 6 looks at teacher feedback and discusses how teachers can use effective feedback strategies. Chapter 7 explores the use and abuse of group work and shows teachers how they can make group work more effective. Chapter 8 explores non-verbal communication in the classroom and outlines how teachers can become more aware of the different types of nonverbal communication and their effect on student learning. Chapter 9, the final chapter, discusses how teachers can make reflecting on classroom communication and interaction part of their overall professional development by suggesting ways individual teachers or teachers in groups can examine different aspects of classroom communication and interaction.

Readers can start their reflections with any chapter and pursue them in as much detail as their schedules permit. One of the unique features of this book is the section in each chapter called "Thinking About Your Own Classroom," which includes provocative questions to help teachers directly apply the material they have read to their own classroom context. Teachers can, of course, think about their class on their own or with other teachers, or they can make up their own questions for discussion. Just as Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living, I suggest that the unexamined class is not worth teaching. I hope that teachers, students, and administrators get as much fun out of reading this book as I have had in writing it. Happy reflecting!

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