



The Self-Directed Learning Handbook: Challenging Adolescent Students to Excel

By Maurice Gibbons

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The Self-Directed Learning Handbook offers teachers and principals an innovative program for customizing schooling to the learning needs of individual students-- and for motivating them to take increasing responsibility for deciding what and how they should learn. Whether the students are struggling or proficient, the program is designed to nurture their natural passion for learning and mastery, challenging them to go beyond the easy and familiar so they can truly excel. The program can be introduced in stages in any middle or high school classroom and enables students of diverse abilities to design and pursue independent course work, special projects, or even artistic presentations, community field work or apprenticeships. Using this approach, the students take on an increasingly autonomous, self-directed role as they progress. The heart of the program is the action contract (or learning agreement) whereby the student sets challenging yet attainable goals, commits to a path for achieving them, and evaluates the results. Special emphasis is placed on developing skills and competencies that can serve the student well in his or her academic and career endeavors.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This is a how to book for adventurous teachers who understand that learning is an integral component of teaching." (*Education Review*, December 2, 2003)

Review

"When Maurice Gibbons introduced his Walkabout model a few years ago, he opened exciting new possibilities for relevant, meaningful, and challenging learning to take place in high schools. In this new book he provides teachers with a comprehensive, step-by-step process for realizing these possibilities in their classrooms."

— Ron Miller, executive editor, *Paths of Learning* magazine

"This book offers thorough and detailed instruction in the creation of self-directed learning environments. It's a much-needed 'how-to' manual for classroom teachers who want to motivate and empower their students to flourish as learners."

— Karen Fernandez, teacher, Denver Public Schools

"Will help teachers and administrators implement a vision of schooling that will revitalize their professional lives while providing avenues to success for all their students. I have seen the successful application of his vision for over twenty years, and this handbook is a practical guide for expanding the possibilities to any school that wishes to challenge itself to become the best that it can be."

— Arnold Langberg, educational consultant, former principal of Jefferson County Open High School

"This is one of the most practical, wisest, and most upbeat books I've encountered in thirty years of teaching, and working with teachers. Educators who want to do SDL will find this an extraordinary valuable resource, one they use over and over again."

— Joe Nathan, director, University of Minnesota Center for School Change

From the Publisher

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