



MINORITIES &

SUCCESS

Fall 2017

7 Traits of Truly Horrible Bosses

Relationships at Work

Why Teaching is a Stressful Career

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Happy New (Federal Fiscal) Year! Now?

By: Gloria Berthold Larkin

The U.S. federal government runs on a different calendar than most businesses. While many businesses targeting consumers or selling to other businesses are pushing hard to “make the numbers” before the calendar year end of December 31, the federal government is ahead of the curve because October 1 starts the federal fiscal new year. While you may not hear Auld Lang Syne being sung or fireworks shooting in the night to signal the government’s new year, businesses looking to beef up

revenues and open new markets would be well-served to become familiar with the rules of the federal spending game right now.

Not Business as Usual

For those businesses already involved in federal contracting, you know that normally, there is a bit of a pause during October, and maybe even through December as the feds gear up

for a new budget and we all wait for Congress and White House to agree on what will be spent in the new year. However, this is not a normal year

The Recovery (or Stimulus) spending now is in the final spending phase and BRAC spending has a “hard stop” coming up very soon. While the regular federal spend will see a stall, the Stimulus and BRAC projects will pick up the slack. Firms that have stepped up with strategic, competitive bids have a real chance of winning

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more business than imaginable. Would you like proof?

Single Bidder Takes All

A recent report at the federal web site USASpending.gov stated that out of the total of \$550 billion dollars spent last year with contractors for services and products needed to run the government, over \$46 billion dollars went to companies winning bids where everyone could compete, but only *one bid or offer was received*. There were 277,123 contractors who found *no competition*, and they submitted **41,093** bids to win a total of **\$46,405,769,371** last year!

This is proof positive that there are many opportunities available where competition is not just reasonable, but non-existent. The lottery's tag line used to be "you have to play to win." With these federal contracting numbers, you can see that "you have to bid to win."

Not a Free For All

However, do not be misled. This is not a situation where sloppiness, poorly-prepared proposals or high prices win. Much to the contrary, companies who prevail, will instead take the situation very seriously, and invest a great deal of time, energy and money to build relationships with all of the layers of decision-makers, fine-tune their back-office accounting and pricing processes, learn the art of writing a winning proposal and weed through the scads of available lawyers to find the ones who are truly experts in federal contracting law.

Five Special Tactics to Kick Off the New Federal Fiscal Year

Check Your PPIRS Now

Because the federal government is risk-adverse, the stronger your record is regarding past performance, the better your chances are of winning. If your customers say nothing, or, even worse, say bad things about you, you won't win the contract. PPIRS is a shared data warehouse of federal government report cards that detail a vendor's performance on current (or completed) contracts.

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Contracting officers go here to see how you are rated. If you have high ratings, your chances are much better of winning the contract. If you have low ratings, you will not win a contract. You can see your record, but you cannot see other vendor's records and nor can they see yours. For more information go to: <http://www.ppirs.gov/>.

Craft a Powerful One Page Capability Statement

This document is the single most effective tool a company can use to open doors to contracting opportunities in the federal government. It is amazing how many business people fail to use this document. It is inexpensive to produce and can be created in Word or Publisher. A smart vendor will create different versions for every

targeted agency, military base and prime contractor or teaming partner. Dump the generic "three-fold brochure" mindset and instead craft a one-page document where you state a "results" focus using the government's statement of work terminology and keywords. [Note: MEA magazine has made arrangements so that the reader may receive a free federal government-focused Capability Statement Template by emailing the author of this article.]

Does Your Web Site Say Stop or Go?

Contracting officers and program managers, the key decision makers, use the internet to research companies and their abilities. You will shoot yourself in the foot if you have music or "flash" on your home page.

Why? These people are pressed for time and many work in an open or cubicle environment. When they click on a home page that has music, they will instantly exit and go no further. Music is not appropriate in this environment (unless you are a DJ, singer or musician). Many web sites start off with a flash program on their home page. This causes extra steps or clicks to find government-related information. While this may be catchy in the private sector, it is another reason to exit because it wastes time and shows that the company does not understand the government market. To be more effective, update your web site to include core competencies, past performance, differentiators. Incorporate these specific terms and fill your government-oriented pages with proof. Use the Capability Statement template as a guide. Throw out all the generic marketing speak and

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write web copy as if you are competing on a contract.

The Little Known Secret to Writing a Winning RFP Response

Entire books have been written about proposals and writing winning responses. However, today, you will increase your chances of winning if you make one powerful paradigm shift: Don't write to win but rather, write the response to be the last man (or woman) standing. The secret is that winners are chosen because they were not eliminated during the proposal grading process, not necessarily because they had the best idea or even best price. Learn this and watch your win ratio skyrocket.

Improve Your Procurement Translation Skills

The federal government spends billions every year with companies who look exactly like yours. If they say they don't have money, what they really are saying is they don't know or trust your firm well enough to give you the business. They may not be able to loosen up millions at a time, but they want to spend every dime through the entire fiscal year and will find all sorts of ways to buy from people they know and trust to do a good job. It is your responsibility to become the kind of company that decision-makers feel comfortable choosing. You will start winning more contracts when you position your firm as the best choice, the least risky choice, and the most-experienced choice.

Bonus Tip to Win

Remember, as noted earlier, nine percent of federal contracts are going to single bidders. You will improve the chance of your winning when you use the scalpel, mirror and magnifying glass, and be ruthless to hone your proposal skills to win. Use the scalpel to trim the price, the mirror to see how you look to others and the magnifying glass to examine your accounting and pricing procedures, hiring processes and record-keeping. Whether you are competing against someone or just yourself, the higher you score and ultimately mitigate the risk in doing business with your company, the more contacts you will win.

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7 Traits of Truly Horrible Bosses

By: Jack Fehr

If you own a small business, chances are you're not only a business owner, but a boss. Whether you have employees or are managing vendors, managing people is part of your job description. If you are striving to grow your business, or reevaluating how to manage one, you can increase your chances of success by avoiding these seven traits of truly horrible bosses.

1. They fail to communicate.

You can follow every best practice

there is to running a business and still fall short if you fail to communicate those practices to your employees.

"The big differentiator of small business success is communication," says Chester Elton, founder of New Jersey based management consultant The Culture Works and author of *What Motivates Me* and *All In*. Horrible bosses often forget this; they fail to share their plans with their employees and refuse to listen to the good ideas those employees have to offer. As a result, they often struggle

with employee buy-in, support and morale.

Solution:

Communication involves both talking and listening, and many experts would agree that the latter is the more important of the two. "When a boss listens thoughtfully and gives employees permission to speak the truth and be supportive to one another, it is a beautiful thing," says Barbara Chan, executive coach and certified management consultant of Barbara Chan Consulting Group.

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But learning to communicate clearly is no easy task. Start by setting goals and sharing your vision with your employees. Put your ego aside, ask for feedback, and make the changes that can benefit your business.

2. They refuse to get the help they need.

Many business owners lack the time needed to learn new skills and others downright dislike some of the functions necessary to run a business. “Starting out, business owners wear multiple hats and have a learning curve,” says Jeremy Sisemore, founder of ASAP Talent Services in Kingwood, Texas. “Sometime after I started my company, I realized I needed to hire or outsource where I was weak or unwilling. Just because I was great at recruiting didn’t mean I would run a great business. So my first big hire was an

operations person.” Business owners who try to do everything themselves can’t possibly do everything well, and they risk the future of their companies.

Solution:

Learn to delegate effectively. This means assigning existing employees to the tasks they’re better suited for, as well as hiring new employees to fill in the gaps. Don’t struggle to do something that you neither have the time or skills to do. Learn to let go and accept help instead of ignoring growing problems. You’ll be setting your business on the path to success.

3. They are insecure.

“Great leaders are invested in finding people smarter than them,” says Jane Hundley, an organizational psychologist and founder of Impact Management, Inc., an executive consulting firm. “Bad leaders don’t

hire anyone who threatens them,” adds Hundley. “It is extremely important for bosses of any kind to learn their strengths and gaps, and to hire people with the knowledge, skills and work styles that complement their own,” says Chan. “One of my clients was a founder who had hired a lot of people like himself, and he couldn’t understand why his company didn’t perform the way he wanted. Everyone had the same mindset, same skills and knowledge. But it takes all kinds of people to succeed: analytical, relational and creative. Successful businesses need a diversity of thinking and action to come together for the same purpose.”

Solution:

If you keep letting your insecurities drive you, you – and your business – are bound to fail. So stop competing with your employees. Accept that they are there to help

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you grow your business. Going forward, focus on hiring employees and consultant who will complement your skills.

4. They are bullies.

Whether you work alone and delegate some tasks to vendors, or you're managing a staff of employees, people don't work well with abusive bosses. "I worked for companies where you knew you would get clobbered," recalls Hundley. "One boss would criticize employees in front of everyone. All this did was create scorn. You want to praise in public, criticize in private... I worked with another company with employees who felt like they were in a pop-a-mole game. Employees said they didn't speak up because they didn't want to get whacked. The boss

didn't understand why everyone sat with their heads down in meetings. That's the worst thing—mismanaging your employees to the point where they become disengaged."

Solution:

If you feel like you're constantly blowing up at employees or vendors, or preventing others from getting a word in, it's time to change your management style to create a culture of teamwork. If you think your behavior is fine but your employees are showing signs of mismanagement, take a step back and reconsider if you're really doing a good job. If necessary, ask your employees for anonymous feedback on your management style.

5. They micromanage their employees.

When business owners start out doing

everything themselves, it can be hard to relinquish control.

"Micromanaging is one of biggest challenges to growing a business," says Sisemore. In fact, micromanagement can damage both employee morale and the value of a business. Not only do employees find it difficult to have someone hovering over their shoulders, but "micromanagers are tacticians when they need to be leaders," says Hundley. Rather than focusing on the big picture, they lose the forest for the trees by preoccupying themselves with minor, and often unimportant, ideas.

Solution:

"There are many ways to accomplish the same task, but you have to give workers the freedom to find their way," says Chan. Start by empowering employees to take initiative and rewarding creativity.

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This means allowing them to make decisions without prior approval and recognizing and encouraging those who take risks, even if their efforts don't pan out. Make this commitment and you'll be pleased with the improvements you see in productivity and office morale.

6. They overwork everyone.

Some bosses expect their employees to work 24/7. Thus, it's not surprising that one study found that nearly 60% of respondents believe bad bosses have the most negative impact on work-life balance. When employers take their employees for granted, morale and productivity are bound to suffer.

Solution:

Rested employees are happy employees, so make sure your employees are taking time off. "When workers get off the grid—get real rejuvenation—they come back as totally different employees," says Katharine Halpin, founder of the Halpin Companies and author of *Alignment for Success: Bringing Out the Best in Yourself, Your Teams, and Your Company*. "They get off the hamster wheel for a while." In addition to letting your employees take time off, allow for more flexibility in their work schedules. If you have an employee with young kids, respect the fact that he might need to come in a little later or leave a little earlier to spend time with them.

7. They don't acknowledge employee success.

Sometimes, bosses don't realize their management style hurts employees and, by extension, the company. Others don't care—they simply lack empathy. "People don't quit companies—they quit bosses," says Elton. "We forget to celebrate what employees do right.

Solution: "Employees crave communication—especially positive feedback," says Sisemore. Therefore, you should take the time to recognize and congratulate employees on a job well done. "Some small business owners want to make it all about how employees don't do their jobs right," adds Sisemore. "But if they take the time to coach their employees, they set them up for success." Focus on highlighting the talents your employees bring to the table and find ways for them to use these skills successfully. You'll be surprised by how much more invested they are in their jobs.

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Relationships at Work - Managing Former Peers

By: *Helen Wilkie*

Among new and recently appointed managers, undoubtedly the number one issue that comes up is the challenge of managing people who once were peers, or perhaps even friends. Generally, people's concerns fall into two categories:

1. Keeping friendships even though the work relationship has changed
2. Keeping morale and productivity up as people adjust to the new situation.

First, the friendship issue. It IS possible to continue to be friends, but never in exactly the same way. Things can never be the same between you, because the dynamic that drives your interactions every day has changed, and this is something you simply have to accept. Now, what about keeping up morale and productivity? Remember, this applies not only to one person on your team, but everyone. Here are three action items to help you set the stage for success by dealing with both issues together.

First, once again it all comes down to communication, as so many issues in the workplace do. I recommend that very soon after you take over your new role, you sit down with your former peer and begin by acknowledging that the situation is uncomfortable for both of you. Tell the person you have always valued their friendship, and you still do, even though it must now be on a slightly different basis. Ask the person how he or she is feeling about the new relationship, and give them an opportunity to

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express those feelings. Then, ask for the person's support as you enter your new role. In return, commit to always holding the other person in as high regard as before and respecting his or her contribution.

This type of discussion has the potential to become emotionally fraught, but it must be done, if for no other reason than to clear the air. Next, you need to consider the "optics" of your friendship, i.e. the perception others in the department have. Even if you are not giving this person any special treatment, sometimes people refuse to believe that. Because you were friends before, some people will assume they will always have an advantage over everyone else.

You can attack this issue on two fronts. First, bring it up with your friend. You can say that even though you have both gone out of your way to avoid any perception of favoritism, some people seem determined to imagine it. Ask the person if he or she has any ideas on how you might handle it, and you might be surprised at the insights you get from a different perspective. On the other hand, you need to speak with those who believe they are being treated unfairly and get things out in the open. This conversation will test your communication skills, as it can also be emotional. But again, it's better to have the discussion than just hope the problem will go away, because it won't.

Remember those days before you were promoted, when you and your colleagues would talk about problems at work? Remember how everyone used to vent about what was going on at any given time? Remember all those "ain't it awful?" conversations? Well, all that has to stop now. As a manager, particularly a new one, you can't afford to discuss business problems with your employees. It's too easy for someone to say something that you must receive in a different way now that you are representing management.

You are much better off to nurture relationships with other people at your level but in other areas of the company, or even mentors outside the company. You can safely use these people as a sounding board when you have business ideas to discuss or problems to solve. I hope I haven't put you off the whole idea of becoming a manager! Certainly there's a whole new set of challenges facing you now, but solving problems is a major management skillset, so you might look on this as one of your first opportunities to sharpen those skills.

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Is Your Child Learning Disabled (LD) Or Just a Different Learner (DL)?

By: Dr Patricia Porter

Student who are different learners often appear to have a learning disability. But there is an enormous difference between the two and parents need to understand this.

Parents often think that their child has a learning disability when the issue is that their child is a different learner and needs a different teaching approach

A few days ago I got a call from a mother who is worried about her

son's ability to learn. Her concerns started when he moved into Grade 4. She told me that her son is very bright and that he used to get straight 'A's' but that his grades had started to go down, and he was having problems studying.

What could they do? The parents were afraid that their son had a learning disability. They wanted to know how they could help him learn.

The family gave me two enormous

clues that helped me determine that this boy did not have a learning disability.

Firstly, his troubles only started when he went to Grade 4. If he had a genuine learning disability they would have been apparent much earlier.

Secondly, he had been getting 'A's' and it seemed that his grades were dropping because he was not studying.

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These are signs of a 'different learner' rather than a learner with a disability.

It was a brief call, but here is my read on the situation.

Many children start to have learning problems when they go into Grade 4 as a result of changes in the way they are taught. In Grades 1 - 3 teachers use very visual ways of teaching. Children may have limited language ability at this age and the teacher understands this and compensates by using visual ways of getting the message across.

Then, in Grade 4, everything changes. Teachers assume that children have developed the language skills they need and they use a much more verbal teaching style.

Most children can accommodate this change in teaching style, for some (about 25% is my guess) it creates real learning difficulties. These students may, or may not, have developed the language skills they need but they cling onto their preference to learn visually.

This is when bright students start to create wonderful strategies to either avoid working or to find ways to make the teaching make sense. I am always amazed at how hard some of these students actually work and how little progress they end up making.

Then, two things start to happen.

1. Because learning is so hard the student stops trying so hard, grades drop, and
2. The student starts to think he or she is stupid and cannot learn, so stops trying to learn.

The situation becomes a downward spiral.

The ONLY way to stop the student spiraling downward, and the parents becoming upset and frustrated, is to find out how the student likes to learn (preferred learning style) and show the parents, and student, how to adapt the teaching situation to meet their learning needs.

And the irony is that it is easy to do, prevents a lot of anxiety and frustration, and best of all, helps the student become the kind of learner that he is capable of becoming.

It is a guaranteed process, it works every time!! What else can you say that about?

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Ask Your College Leaders, “What Are Your Plans For Improving Student Employment Success?”

By: *Bob Roth*

Since most students attend college to put themselves in a position to graduate with jobs in their fields of interest, jobs that pay well and have career potential, college leaders should do everything possible to support student career goals.

When college leaders are truly concerned about student employment success, they:

- Make student employment success a high priority
- Regularly communicate that goal to

every member of their college community

- Listen to the needs of their Students and Career Service Professionals
- Address the information, counseling, training and coaching needs of students
- Research the best practices that already exist at other colleges
- Provide the needed resources (Personnel, Time, Money, Space & Training, etc.)

- Track the employment success of students in each and every major

- Facilitate contact between current and former students
- Make continuous improvement in student employment success a way of life

When college leaders are not interested in improving student employment success, they:

- Fail to recognize the need for student employment success

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- Take no responsibility for the poor showing of students in the job market
- Underfund and understaff the Career Services Department
- Minimize the financial burden that concerns most students
- Fail to address the information, counseling, training and coaching needs of students
- Do not identify the best practices that already exist at other colleges
- Fail to gather and evaluate the statistics that monitor student employment efforts
- Never ask Students and Career Service Professionals about their needs

The opportunity to improve student employment success is often blocked by closed minds, the fear of change

and the knowledge that hard work is needed. Therefore, wise students attend colleges where College Leaders:

- Make student employment success a high priority
- Actively seek to learn about the best practices of other colleges
- Put students in touch with graduates in their fields of study
- Motivate their entire college community to help students identify, prepare for and land good jobs in their areas of interest
- Track and publish the statistics that demonstrate the college's performance in helping students achieve their career goals
- Are active and visible in improving student employment success rates

- Believe in and practice continuous improvement

College leaders who are oblivious to the employment needs of their students and/or do nothing to address those needs should not be rewarded with high student attendance rates. Wise students select and attend colleges that have previously demonstrated their ability to help students achieve their employment goals.

All high school seniors, current college students and their parents should be asking College Leaders about their current efforts to ensure student employment success. Follow up by asking, "What are your plans for improving student employment success?" Listen carefully to the answers you receive. If those answers are defensive, elusive, nonspecific or unimpressive, factor that into your decisions.

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Why Teaching Is a Stressful Career - The Occupation Hazards

By: Richard D Boyce

Now in 2016, much is being written and spoken about teacher stress. Teaching has always been a stressful career. Working with 25 individuals children in a primary school class would stretch the patience of most people. Then, in a high school situation, a teacher might have to interact with over 100 individual teenagers in a wide age range over a single day. We all know how difficult the teenage years are for the teenagers let alone their parents and teachers.

Stress can be divided into two areas. The first is related directly to the

teaching situation while the second is related to issues from outside the classroom. In the main, the first type of stress is part and parcel of being in front of a class. Most teachers take that stress “in their stride”. The second is not in the control of the teacher. That is the dangerous stress, the stress that caused mental anguish and often leads to illness.

In this article, the first type of stress will be discussed. Let me begin by listing the many roles a teacher plays in a single day. The teacher will be:

A lecturer; a demonstrator;

A story teller; a tutor;

An advisor; a disciplinarian;

a first aid attendant; a safety officer on playground duty;

a bus supervisor; an exam writer and marker;

a report writer; “a shoulder to cry on”;

a sport’s coach; a concert organizer

a work place health and safety officer; and

a student teacher supervisor. These are

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just some of the roles of a teacher over one day.

The lists can go on and on. What profession expects their personnel to have as many roles to perform as these each and every day of their working life?

Let us not forget that the teacher then has to interact with up to thirty different individuals at a time in the classroom. All are different in many ways. All have problems at one time or other that the teacher must address in his/her planning for each and every lesson. Many of these problems are not the fault of the child but are often the result of the environment in which they live. On top of these issues come the personal family tragedies such as a death of a loved one and a family breakup.

Now there are many extra activities that add to the day to day work of a teacher and that impinge on the teacher's time and increase their stress level. They

include:

- Preparing for day one with a new class;
- Setting, organizing, marking examinations and reporting;
- Preparing for parent/teacher evening and attending them;
- Writing new work program for a new syllabus;
- Preparing for a school fete, concert, camp, excursion*;
- Training a sporting team*;
- Organizing the teaching of a student teacher and then offering advice and writing an assessment of that student teacher.
- Planning for the next year;
- Attending mandated professional development.

The list again could be extended. But I'm sure the reader gets the message. Those

with an * can add much for the teacher to enjoy but still create stress.

Finally, one of the important issues for teachers is their physical and mental health. Many teacher refuse to have sick days feeling they are letting their class down. They simply put off being sick. But the day the school holidays begin, they become sick. Many are so mentally exhausted and stressed; they simply sit down and vegetate for many days early in the holidays.

So it is easy to see how teaching is ranked second only to air traffic controllers in the race to be the most stressed professionals. So when you next think of being critical of the teaching professional, ask yourself this question. "Could I successfully adopt all the roles of a teacher every day without making any mistakes?" if "yes" is your answer", then you are free to be critical of, rather than sympathetic towards, your child's teacher.

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Student-Led Parent/Teacher Conferences

By: Gini Cunningham

As the first 9-weeks ends, time for parent/teacher conferences arises. Having participated in many of these over the years I appreciate the time and effort teachers put forth to inform parents. I have also witnessed conferences that transformed into an attack instead of an aid. If my child is not doing well, I certainly want to know. In fact, I really wanted to know weeks ago when my husband and I could have interceded to change the flow of assignments toward success. Report card time is simply too late. It also bothers me when teachers ramble on about schooling, but my

child is not present to fill in the gaps. If he has been naughty and disruptive, I want to know and address it now, not later in a “he said/she said” situation. If my child is not completing her work or is failing exams, I want to know. Again sooner is far better but I would also like to hear my child’s version of not understanding or achieving. I’m not suggesting siding with my child but I would like to hear his/her reflections.

Many teachers avoid student-led conferences for reasons including: too busy; too much time; students aren’t prepared for something so important;

it’s “my” job. I realize with just 15 minutes for the conference, time is stretched, but student-led conferences can save precious minutes especially when briefly rehearsed and well organized in advanced. The teacher can certainly start with an overview of classwork and goals and then the child presents 3-5 papers and explains to Mom, Dad, and teacher how the work was completed, what thought was put into responses, what was learned, and what lessons and adjustments need to come next. This forces ownership of work onto the student and at the same time relieves the fear of being in

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trouble knowing that the conference is about learning and growth not a personal assault.

In preparation for this student-led orientation, listed are ways the teacher and student might plan and prepare for this type of conference or, lacking in-school participation, how a parent might discuss student work at home. As the teacher, select several assignments from a variety of subjects (elementary) or from a variety of concepts and topics (secondary). It is valuable to choose excellent assignments as well as those that are in need of improvement so that a broader picture of learning can be assessed. Now have the student sort through the pile, picking 3-5 for discussion. Later, after practice, students can do an entire self-select process. Next the student ranks the assignments or quizzes from best to least best. Older students can then add notes about the assignment to guide their

dialogue or practice orally with a trusted friend. Younger students, it seems, are excited to talk honestly and openly about their work primarily without guidance or hesitation.

At conference time the student decides whether to start with the best work or least best and then describes the assignment, the understanding and knowledge gained, why the grade is as it is, and what the student plans to do to improve and advance proficiency and capabilities. It is an awesome occasion to observe a child serve as leader of the learning. The teacher and parent may ask questions or request deeper explanation but “good job” and “oh, my!” are not permitted. Clear, precise feedback such as, “It is interesting how you solved the problem using these three steps and then skipped the last one [an all-important one that when omitted results in a wrong answer]. Please tell me more about this.” After the child enlightens listeners the next response

might be, “What will you do differently next time?” The right answer indicates the child now really comprehends and will apply this knowledge to future work.

Parents, your at-home conference can be conducted in much the same way. Keep student work as it arrives home and periodically complete a check, asking about the assignment, procedures and methods utilized, what your child learned or will do differently or how your child can now apply this knowledge. At first it may seem odd having in-depth discussions on learning but soon it will become a natural and normal element of dinnertime conversation. Who benefits to the highest degree? Your child, of course, who knows you really care about achievement and learning as well as applying knowledge to succeed academically. These discussion skills hold lifelong advantages in clarification of details and descriptive language in school and in careers beyond.

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