

## **AN INVITATION**

We invite you  
to set aside any preconceived ideas,  
open your mind and your heart,  
put on your professional thinking cap,  
and explore the many ways of

## **ASKING SMART QUESTIONS**

*To take the leaps?  
A provocative question is the only way that I've found.*  
—Bandrowski, James F

### **A Familiar Chinese Story**

A poor man asked a wise man to give him a fish because his family was starving. But the wise man refused. Instead he offered to teach the poor man to fish because then his family would be fed every day, not just one day.

## **PARADIGM SHIFT**

What the wise man offered the poor one was a paradigm shift—a different way to view his problem. That's what this book offers: a paradigm shift in the way you view questions. If you learn what kind of questions to ask or what kind of questions you are being asked, then you have begun to develop a precision tool for learning which will

- ▶ make your professional life easier, more productive, and more fun,
- ▶ and enable you, in the long run, to save time.

If you spend some time exploring the techniques in this book, we're convinced you'll also enhance your personal relationships. You don't have to do it all at once—just take a deep breath and, as they say in Australia, "Give it a go!"

# **TEACHING QUESTION-ASKING SKILLS**

## **WHOSE QUESTIONS?**

Traditionally, teachers bombard students with questions, both oral and written. Students, however, do not reciprocate. Research indicates that over a school year, the norm in K-12 classrooms is one student-generated question per student per month. (Dillon, 1988). To fill the gaps, teachers are producing 84 questions for every two student produced question during any given k-12 classroom hour. We then expect students to give back **THE** answers that we have already determined to be correct. The future academic success of most students, therefore, rests on their ability to reproduce answers, produced by others, to questions generated by others, thus “proving” they are educated or trained.

Teachers will serve students better if they help *students* become proficient at question asking—a skill in which most of them are novices. Recall the story of the wise man who declared that giving a man a fish made him dependent on others forever, but teaching the man how to fish made him independent forever. It’s a lesson to remember and honor.

## **BENEFITS OF FLIP-FLOPPING**

The benefits of taking the time to encourage and teach your students to develop question-asking skills are many. Good questions create excitement in the learning process and help produce good answers by...

- ▶ **stimulating thinking on many levels.**
- ▶ **exploring new ways of viewing old ideas.**
- ▶ **sharing existing attitudes, values or ideas.**
- ▶ **stimulating group discussion.**

By teaching question-asking skills to your students you will **immediately** have a whole classroom full of hands flying ceiling-wards. Your students will be eager to answer your stimulating questions and to generate their own; and you will be impressed by the incisiveness of your students’ thinking.