

12<sup>th</sup> Annual  
**Systems  
CHANGE**  
CONFERENCE  
and SD Teacher of the Year Banquet

October 19-21, 2011  
Spearfish, SD

[www.systemschange.  
midwestmaple.org](http://www.systemschange.midwestmaple.org)

[ FROM THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *RESULTS NOW* ]

# FOCUS

**Elevating the Essentials**  
To Radically Improve Student Learning

**MIKE SCHMOKER**

Focus of  
**FOCUS** is  
Simplicity  
and Rigor



“...discern...critical distinctions...  
between good sense and attractive nonsense.”

-Schmok

Does this book, *Focus*, look like good sense or  
attractive nonsense?

# Focus of **FOCUS**

- Glimpse into Schmoker's Essentials to Radically Improve Student Learning
  - Rationale
  - Strategies for educators
  - Sample lesson plans/templates
  
- Determine if this Book is Worth Further Consideration
  - Online bookstudy tie website [www.tie.net](http://www.tie.net)

# Mike Schmoker

- <http://www.ascd.org/Publications/Authors/Mike-Schmoker.aspx?id=772617157001>

“The implementation of coherent curriculum; effective lessons; and abundant amounts of purposeful reading, writing, and talking should be our highest priorities.”

-appears 13 times in the first 24 pages of *Focus*

# Rational:

## Complete the QuickWrite on your table

***Focus: Elevating the Essentials to Radically Improve Student Learning*** By Michael J. Schmoker

***The Power of Simplicity, Clarity, and Priority***

Consider a football team that loses about half of its games, year after year. (There is some autobiography here; I coached football for a short time.) Each week, the coaches scour the Internet to find new, complex plays and offensive schemes. This confuses the players, who never mastered the last set of plays. All the while, the coaches never fully note something very boring but important: the performance of their offensive line. If they paid attention to what every coach knows, they would notice that their offensive linemen have never sufficiently mastered the fundamentals of effective blocking, like footwork and body position. If even reasonably well executed, these



Quick write

Write a personal understanding of and/or a reaction to one of the paragraphs in the sidebar. Five minutes.

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# Chap. 2 What We Teach

Conley and his colleagues found that the following four intellectual standards were paramount, within and the among the disciplines:

1. Read to infer/interpret/draw conclusions.
2. Support arguments with evidence.
3. Resolve conflicting views encountered in source documents.
4. Solve complex problems with no obvious answer.

# Chap. 2 What We Teach

“Leaders must be seen as clarifiers, focusers, the ‘keepers of the core,’ who incessantly ‘cut through the clutter...to distinguish between what is merely important and what is imperative...those few things you must never forget...”

-page 18

Steve Jobs is as proud, he said, “of the things we have not done as I am of the ones we have done.”



# Chap. 3 How We Teach

- Anticipatory set
- Interactive lecture
- Direct teaching/modeling
- Guided Practice
- Check for understanding

Borax company's one thing is safety. The company started every meeting with an anecdote about how injuries were averted by employees.

# Chap. 3 How We Teach

Borax company's one thing is safety. The company started every meeting with an anecdote about how injuries were averted by employees.

-Page 19

If our one thing is learning...

Tell a story of a recent sound lesson.

# Chap. 3 How We Teach

Borax company's one thing is safety. The company started every meeting with an anecdote about how injuries were averted by employees.

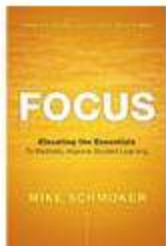
-Page 19

*The question confronting most schools and districts is not, "What do we need to know in order to improve?" but rather, "Will we turn what we already know into action?"*

-Richard DuFour

# Chap. 3 How We Teach

- Interactive lecture and direct teaching
- Literacy-based lessons (read, talk, and write) with a focus on any text



## Confucious Say...

Page 155

*The Analects of Confucius* make very interesting reading: Confucious's simple aphorism had a profound, enduring impact on China's history, culture, and development. *They could be read by most 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> graders.* There is no way to understand their rich appeal without reading a few of these eloquent teachings, available online at <http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/analects.htm>. Students can argue about their merits and compare Confucious's perspective to current or less ancient notions of wisdom.

Argue about merits and compare Confucious's perspective to current or less ancient notions of wisdom.



The Master said,	What does Confucius mean? What are the merits of his thoughts?	How does this compare to thinking today? List a modern aphorism that compares or contrasts to Confucius's.
"Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous."		
"Hear much and put aside the points of which you stand in doubt, while you speak cautiously at the same time of the others: -- then you will afford few occasions for blame. See much and put aside the things which seem perilous, while you are cautious at the same time in carrying the others into		

# More Argument, Fewer Standards

By Mike Schmoker and Gerald Graff

“In the meantime, let’s immediately begin, as the new standards urge us, to give students hundreds of opportunities, every year, to dismantle and defend arguments about increasingly rich, complex texts. From the earliest grades, let’s have them argue about the pros and cons of almost anything: literary characters and interpretations, global warming, capitalism vs. socialism, Sarah Palin, or the comparative quality of life in the United States and Canada (based on statistical analysis). Let’s ask students to explain their reasoning for which alternative-energy source we should invest in as they read, talk, and write about what they are learning in novels, textbooks, newspapers, and magazines.”

Published Online: April 19, 2011 <http://mikeschmoker.com/more-argument.html>

Published in Print: April 20, 2011, as **More Argument, Fewer Standards** Commentary



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# Chap. 4-7 Content Areas

□ Language Arts

[www.kellygallagher.org](http://www.kellygallagher.org)

□ Social Studies

[www.ProCon.org](http://www.ProCon.org)

□ Science

[www.theweek.com](http://www.theweek.com)

□ Math

I think the answer is \_\_\_\_\_

I think that because \_\_\_\_\_

I figured this out by \_\_\_\_\_

**“If you are born poor, you’d better start reading.”**

-Joe Queenan-Page 94

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