

Book Review

**The Teacher 50 Critical Questions for Inspiring Classroom Excellence,
by Barate K. Kafele, Alexandria, Virginia, USA: ASCD, 2016**

By

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The reason we chose to review this book is because we thought it would be helpful to teachers in Thailand and throughout the world. The book is inspirational.

The author breaks down the Teacher 50 into 10 areas: Teacher Attitude, Student Motivation, Classroom Climate and Culture, Building Relationships, Classroom Instruction, Cultural Responsiveness, Teacher Accountability, Planning and Organization, Personal Development and Parental Engagement.

Chapter 1: Teacher Attitude

Question: Are My Students at an Advantage Because I am Their Teacher?

All areas are important for students, but the author feels the most important is the students' teachers. It is an inspiring teacher attitude that is needed for students to experience classroom excellence.

Question: Why Do I Teach, Anyway?

What is the specific reason we teach? What is the reason we get up every day?

Question: How Badly Do I Want My Students to Succeed?

We have to want our students to succeed. We need to be practically obsessed about it.

Question: Where will My Students Be 10 Years from Now as a Result of Having Me as Their Teacher?

It is important to have a vision of students' success. What will our students become tomorrow?

Question: Do My Students See Me as an Example of Who and What They Can Become?

Teachers are Role Models. Do they see us as someone they would like to be like in the future?

Chapter 2: Student Motivation

Question: What Is My Signature Classroom Move?

What one activity, strategy, word, expression—that identifies you?

Question: Do I “Bring the Fire” into My Classroom Every Day?

The energy, excitement and enthusiasm you bring into the classroom every day are important parts of teaching. Fire is energy and relish for teaching.

Question: Do I Believe My Students Can Fly?

Concentrate on students in the classroom and what they can do. Forget about the negative influences.

Question: Have I Helped My Students Put a Definition Next to Their Names?

What are your students driven to do? What impact do you have on your students?

Chapter 3: Classroom Climate and Culture

Question: Is My Classroom a “Bam” Classroom?

Does your classroom present your students with a memorable experience? A sense of positivity and well-being are important.

Question: What is My Classroom’s Way of Life?

This represents the way you and your students are living when together.

Question: What Is It About My Classroom That My Students Can’t Wait to Come Back in the Morning?

Try to create a classroom where students are eager to return to every day.

Question: Do I Teach Math or Mathew?

What is important in your classroom: the subject matter or your students?

Question: Is Your Classroom’s Brand Identity Conducive to Learning at the Highest Levels?

We all have classroom brand identities and need to strive to have them help in learning.

Chapter 4: Building Relationships

Question: Do I Know My Students Beyond the Dismissal Bell?

Do you know your students and their families? Do you know their problems and concerns?

Question: Am I Intimidated by Any of My Students, Their Parents, or the Community in Which They Reside?

We must be willing to accept and understand all of these.

Question: How Do My Students Perceive Me and My Treatment of Them?

How do your students think about you? Do you show concern for them?

Question: How Often Do My Students and I “Break Bread” together?

This can be done by eating together and many other ways of getting to know them.

Chapter 5: Classroom Instruction

Question: How Do I Know Which Instructional Strategies Work Best for Each of My Students?

To know what instructional strategies work best for your students, it is important to get to know them fully.

Question: Who Are the True Stars in My Classroom?

There are many types of students in a classroom and it is important to help them all become stars.

Question: How Do I Connect Learning Across the Content Areas?

It is important to treat all students individually and help them with all content areas.

Question: Does My Teaching Address the 21st Century Student?

It is important to teach all students with 21st Century methods and skills.

Chapter 6: Cultural Responsiveness

Question: Do I Consider My Students’ Cultural Background When I Plan Instruction?

It is important to consider this in our teaching. Students may wonder where they are in a lesson.

Question: How Do I Infuse My Classroom With History and Culture of My Students?

We must try to treat underrepresented cultures well in our classroom.

Question: Do I Ensure That My Students Identify Culturally with the Lessons I Teach?

If students understand and identify with lessons, it will help them a great deal.

Question: How Do I Demonstrate My Sensitivity to the Racial and Ethnic Diversity of My Students?

Are we able to “see” the race and cultures of our students?

Question: Am I Able to Learn All I Can About My Students’ Cultures?

We must try to understand this. There are often negative attitudes.

Chapter 7: Teacher Accountability

Question: Do My Students Have the Option of Failing in My Classroom?

Some degree of short-term failure may help students to learn.

Question: Do I Hold Myself Accountable for Student Failure?

How do we hold ourselves accountable when students fail? What adjustments do we make?

Question: Am I Willing to Accept Responsibility for My Students' Successes and Failures?

If we accept responsibility there is a higher probability that we will do whatever is necessary to make changes.

Question: Do I Reject Poverty as a Legitimate Excuse for Failure?

Do we have skills to help our students who live in poverty?

Question: What Does My Mirror Say About My Effectiveness As a Teacher?

It is important to look carefully and analyze our teaching.

Chapter 8: Planning and Organization

Question: To What Extent Do I Prepare Beyond My Lesson Plans?

The author suggests a personal lesson plan where we address the needs of each student.

Question: How Does Data Drive My Practice?

Does data regarding your students change your teaching?

Question: Have I Developed Expertise in My Content Area?

As teachers, we cannot afford to be average, we must go beyond that.

Question: What Role Does Child Development Theory Play in My Overall Planning?

It is important that we know where our students are developmentally.

Question: Am I Highly Organized as a Teacher?

Organizational skills and time management are so important in teaching.

Chapter 9: Professional Development

Question: What Extent Does Professional Literature Enhance My Practice?

There are so many professional literatures both on paper and on the internet.

Question: How Often Do I Seek Out My Own Professional Development?

There are many conferences, seminars and institutes.

Question: In What Ways Do I Benefit from the Knowledge and Experiences of My Colleagues?

As teachers we are often isolated from our colleagues, it is important to share with others.

Question: Am I Open to Accepting Constructive Feedback from My Colleagues and Administrators?

If we are going to be effective teachers, we need to be able to accept constructive feedback.

Question: Am I Able to Act Upon Suggestions for Improvement from My Colleagues?

How do we act on the constructive feedback?

Chapter 10: Parental Development

Question: How Strong and Productive Are My Relationships with My Students' Parents?

It is important to think about how we are building strong relationships with our students' parents.

Question: How Often Do I Notify My Students' Parents About Their Children's Successes in My Classroom?

When our relationships with students' parents are strong and productive, they are able to do better.

Question: Do My Students' Parents Have Access to Me?

It is important that they have access to us.

Question: Does the Input I Receive from My Students' Parents Matter to Me?

We must remember that our students' parents know them better than we do.

Question: Have I Made Any Student Visits Lately?

Are we comfortable with home visits?

Conclusion

The book is well written and helpful. The questions help us to think about our own teaching. Baruti K. Kaffele was a public school educator in New Jersey for nearly 30 years. He is a sought-after speaker.

Critique

This is a well-written book that it is inspirational. It is to the point and easy to understand. It is 107 pages in length.