Foreword

MY NAME IS Dr. Steve McCammon, and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Schlechty Center located in Louisville, Kentucky. More importantly, perhaps, is that I was a school superintendent for many years, and I was a fierce advocate for the notion that a focus on student engagement is central to the pursuit of profound learning for all students. I do believe that my commitment to that, as well as the role that I have been given to help carry on the work of Dr. Phillip Schlechty, noted author and founder of the Schlechty Center, is the reason that I have been honored to write a foreword to this important work by Megan King.

We at the Schlechty Center have come to know and develop a great respect for Megan as a gifted teacher who truly has a belief system that all students bring a motivation to learn into the classroom. We share her deep commitment and belief that it is the role of the teacher to become a leader and designer of engaging work for the students in their care. We share her belief, as you will see detailed in her work, that while all students bring a motivation to learn, it is our role as educators to seek out those motivations and to design work that will meet those motivations to deepen students' engagement in the good work that we want them to know and be able to do.

Dr. Schlechty often observed that "schools have become a place where kids come to watch adults work." As a lifelong learner and educator, I see how in many cases this has become true, and that a fundamental shift in how we think about teaching and learning is needed. At the heart of this change is the very notion of the teacher becoming more of a leader of engagement and a designer for learning. What Megan King has written here is a very practical approach to understanding this shift and how world language teachers can reconceive the work their students do. While her focus is on designing engaging work in the world language classroom, what she shares in this new

book transfers across all content and learning environments for sure. This book is about quality teaching and learning with deep care for students and the voice that they bring to their own learning.

I am eager for teacher leaders, and those who support and build the capacity for those teachers to excel, to enjoy this new book. It is my experience that so much professional learning today, and books written about teacher improvement, are very program oriented. What Megan captures here is the value of creating a common language around design and applying it to how teachers assess student motivation, honor student voice, and design lessons that appeal to student motives. So many times, we hear educators talk about how professional learning can feel like an extra burden on an already overwhelming sea of changes in the field. What Megan describes in this book is one teacher's journey in cutting through some of that dense noise to focus on how to truly achieve impact by getting very clear about what the students need and how being thoughtful in a quality design process can achieve that desired goal.

I agreed to write this foreword because I believe deeply in the work that Megan has put forth in her new book. If you are a teacher, what you will get out of this book is a new way to consider how you can better connect with your students by considering the motivations they bring to the work. You will also come to understand the power of creating a common language around the Schlechty Center's Design Qualities that will serve you in your design thinking and will encourage important collaboration with your colleagues. If you are a principal or district leader, you will come to understand the power of building the capacity for your staff to focus on becoming teacher leaders and to use design thinking in deepening the engagement of all students. Moreover, she has laid out in detail some specific ways to make that important goal a reality in the classroom of today.

It was time for this book to be written. Dr. Schlechty wrote a series of important works in his lifetime. One of his most widely read books was Engaging Students: The Next Level of Working on the Work (2011). In that book, he wrote about the importance of understanding student engagement and how educators can increase the opportunity to maximize it by considering the use of Design Qualities to create an appeal to those very student motivations that students bring to the classroom. What Megan has done

in this book is to take that work to a practical level and share how this can work in the world language classroom and beyond. Dr. Schlechty would be a proud and avid consumer of this work. I know that I am as well.

Dr. Steve McCammon
President and CEO of the Schlechty Center

An Introduction to the Classroom Standards & Some Assumptions

NOW THAT WE'VE established the importance of the Philosophy of Design and its relevance to the world language classroom, I'd like to give you a "primer" to review some of the basic tenets of Working on the Work. The chapters that follow will help you dive deep into the design qualities and understand how they may appear in your classroom, but their foundation comes from Phil Schlechty's *Working on the Work* (2002) and *Engaging Students* (2011). For readers that may not have a background in Schlechty's work, we will start with some basic understandings and assumptions. The first is what the Schlechty Center terms the "Classroom Standards," which encompass the ten design qualities of work, along with engagement and assessment. We introduced engagement in the first chapter, and for now, I will define "assessment" simply as evaluation of progress towards goals. Below, in brief, are the design qualities. No single design quality holds more weight or importance than another, and the order that I have listed them is simply the order in which I happened to write them.

- Protection from Adverse Consequences: Work without fear of punishment, embarrassment, or inadequacy
- Authenticity: Work satisfies the authentic purposes, needs, and desires of the students
- Choice: Students have some level of control over the work they are doing
- Product Focus: Work results in a product or performance
- Clear and Compelling Standards: Students understand what they are expected to know and do
- Content and Substance: High-quality intellectual work, rich and profound knowledge

- Organization of Knowledge: Knowledge is clear and accessible by nature of the way it is presented or discovered
- Affirmation: "Significant others" affirm your work
- Affiliation: Interdependent, collaborative work
- Novelty and Variety: New forms of work and new products

Working on the Work posits that these qualities are interwoven to varying degrees in the work that you design for your students. Some tasks may satisfy multiple qualities, others may connect to just a few. These qualities will appeal differently to different students, but the goal is to design tasks in a way that incorporates the design qualities that engage most of your students most of the time. By the same token, if your students are not engaged, you have not designed engaging work. It is also important to note that engagement alone does not equal content mastery. For example, Fiesta Friday registers very high levels of engagement but doesn't add much in the way of structural fluency. Our goals are both engagement and communicative growth.

We will also assume that students can learn. They learn constantly, just not always about the content we wish them to learn. Information is merely a YouTube video or Wikipedia page away, so it will also be assumed that students are capable of finding information. As a teacher, your business is to model how the information and skills of your content area can improve the lives of your students, and you must be capable of designing learning experiences and giving feedback that helps them advance and perfect their knowledge and skill.

Let's say your students want to know about gaming in the target language. They have background knowledge of how the game works. They can find their way to the gaming community of target language speakers. They can use translators and dictionaries to interpret the things that are said to them and communicate basic information to other gamers. Why do they need a teacher? Will any of this independent work be valued or contribute to their classroom success? In many classrooms, the answer is no. Those words aren't on vocabulary lists. Spending an hour navigating the game's landscape following game, gamer, and tutorial instructions in the target language won't fill in any blanks on their test. But this is authentic study and use. It holds value in the world, and consequently to your students. You must figure out

how your class will build skills and proficiency for students like these because these are the students in your room. They don't need the answers. They need the practice, the work, and your expert feedback for improvement.

Dominant research—and common understanding of second language learning—supports that the more you hear and attempt a language, the more quickly you learn to use it. Many teachers interpret this to mean that if they do everything in the target language at a level at which students can understand, students will move towards proficiency. Comprehensible input becomes a full-time performance for the teacher involving props, Power-Points, Total Physical Response (TPR), scripted guides, etc. This line of thinking puts the teacher completely in charge of the transmission of information and makes the students totally reliant on the teacher for learning. It also makes the teacher totally and completely exhausted. It's no wonder some teachers abandon ACTFL's goal that 90% of class time be spent in the target language[10].

The responsibility does not lie entirely on the teacher to be the source and manager of language. Students are your "knowledge workers." Give them the resources, guided tasks, and inspiration and they will find and organize knowledge of the target language using the target language. For example, in a sports unit, many teachers would introduce the unit with fancy pictures on a SmartBoard or PowerPoint, or maybe with printed pictures and props. Next, the teacher might model motions to represent the necessary vocabulary about sports—games, equipment, places, players. In this example, information is cultivated by the teacher and transmitted to students through the direct instruction and modeling of the teacher. Students may spend most of their time listening to and perhaps responding with the target language, but most production that is to be done will be driven by the teacher.

A student-work-centered approach to this unit may be to model and provide the names of several sports (many of which may be cognates). Next, direct students to realia (authentic sources from the "real" world) that pertains to their sport: ESPN in the target language, sporting goods store advertisements, stadium websites. Ask students to get in groups by preferred sport and to prepare to present the top 10 critical words for their sport to

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10   American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. (2010, May 22). *ACTFL Position Statement: Use of the Target Language in the Classroom*. Retrieved May 2, 2017 from https://www.actfl.org/news/position-statements/use-the-target-language-the-classroom.

the class. They can find the information. The process will use resources that are authentic to the students. The result will be relevant to their interests because they select it. To complete the work, they must work interdependently to delegate research and create a team product. They can choose who they work with, what sport they'll study, and the words that they deem most important to authentic language use. As the expert, you will give them feedback and guidance as to the words they select, and then you will help them organize their knowledge when they come back together as a class to share their respective vocabulary. Meanwhile, you, the teacher, don't have to do any song and dance to keep their attention. They still spend most of the class time invested in interpreting and producing the target language. The activity is novel to this unit of study. You still achieve engagement and content mastery, and students respect you more in the morning because you gave them choice and honored their interests and abilities.

If you've ever organized a service project, you know that your success at getting volunteers to help will be driven by the reasons people volunteer to participate. Does the cause have personal meaning to them? Will the participant get some benefit, such as service hours for a scholarship? Do people volunteer so that they can spend time with their friends or be part of a team? Once the project begins, if your volunteers aren't getting the work done, it does no good to threaten or punish them because you run the risk that they won't do any more work at all. Instead, you find ways to re-engage them that will result in their wanting to get the job done. Unlike a service project, it is often the case that students don't volunteer to be part of a classroom—more often they are assigned to it. They do, however, arrive as volunteers to class work. When students don't engage in the work, they don't master the content. If we punish them with grades or threaten them with disciplinary consequences, we run the risk that they will choose not to engage in future work. If a teacher's true objective is to successfully help all students learn, he has an obligation to design work that all students will volunteer for.

The ten design qualities introduced at the start of this chapter are the keys to creating learning experiences that students volunteer for. In the chapters which follow, we will take a closer look at the meaning and significance of each quality and consider how strategies for modern language learning affect design for engagement.

BIG IDEAS

In this chapter, we previewed the design qualities and discussed some key assumptions that lay the foundation for the Philosophy of Design. Those assumptions are:

1. Students can learn.
2. Students are capable of finding information.
3. Students are knowledge workers.
4. Students are volunteers to the work.

Questions for Reflection

1. What design quality or qualities do you feel confident that you have background experience with? Which one(s) are you curious about?
2. How have you seen your students learn and find information on their own? What kinds of topics and learning activities do they pursue? In what formats do they engage in learning (internet search, personally with a coach, experimentation, books in the library, social media query, etc.)?
3. What is a task you have tried that you would like to see your students do more of the work than you? What changes could you make for that to happen?
4. What are some things you already do that students "volunteer" for? Why do you think these activities are so engaging for them?