

FOREWORD

I spend most of my time providing professional development to teachers about applying brain research in the classroom, using differentiated instructional strategies, and how to use the Common Core State Standards and prepare for their assessments. When Kristen Swanson and Hadley Ferguson asked me to write this foreword, I took my time reading the manuscript and researching their work. I wanted to be certain that they were offering information that would fit the needs of a diverse population of teachers who were certainly facing the most diverse classrooms they had ever encountered. I know that teachers struggle with engagement, rigor, motivation, and technology. I was hopeful that this book would be among those that offered practical strategies to increase all of these. I was not disappointed.

We have learned through brain research that the person doing the most talking is doing the most learning. In the past, the talker has always been the teacher, trying hard to do a good job and thus providing information for students to absorb and apply. In the present, teachers are asking probing, critical questions to stimulate higher-level thinking. Students, however, have not previously been taught how to think critically or creatively. They were also used to giving only the one “right” answer, so they were often reluctant to participate. Teachers are trying to make changes to meet new standards, adding technology to their curriculum, and feeling some pressure from new teacher-evaluation systems. Many feel challenged or even overwhelmed as they tackle the new more rigorous standards as well as performing at a distinguished level in their chosen profession. In the future, the ideas in a book such as this one will lead us to the necessary changes with ease and with positive results! But the future is now.

It is time we not only engage learners, but also empower them. In order for this to occur, teachers must be empowered first. *Unleashing Student Superpowers: Practical Teaching Strategies for 21st Century Students* will take you on an instructional journey that will give you the control to step back and let the power within your students shine through. This is a guide that encompasses the most important processes to provide total engagement,

encourage questioning and research, think outside the box to create and synthesize, and embed formative assessment throughout the journey.

Swanson and Ferguson provide the bricks for the road you can follow and offer you plans for success for both you and your students. *Unleashing Student Superpowers* provides differentiation strategies, rubrics, real classroom scenarios, standard connections, learning activities, and technology ideas and upgrades. The authors have done the legwork to offer teachers an approach not only to student-centered classrooms, but to student-led classrooms. If you are involved in teacher evaluation, you know that a student-led classroom with students asking the questions is a hallmark of a distinguished teacher.

If you have been running from technology, run no more. This resource provides websites to appeal to the most digital student brains as well as to those of us who find technology challenging, and the authors also supply tools that will deliver the same outcomes that are not technology-based. This is a win-win for students, teachers, and administrators. The technology suggested includes mostly free, easy-to-access, and useful sites that will excite your students and help lead them to mastery. All of the lesson resources are found on Pinterest, where students are introduced to the superpowers and find activities to assist in understanding those powers and using them.

Unleashing Student Superpowers will make heroes out of teachers and students. As you revisit and refine your teaching practices, you will see motivated, engaged, and happy students. The plans for journeying through questioning, gaming, curating, designing, digital inking, and connecting are presented in such a way to make you feel more confident about teaching the 21st century student. You will be giving students the opportunity to be superheroes in their own minds, and you will certainly be a superhero to them as they learn how to approach school as a place to engage their minds, expand their thinking, and become leaders for their learning.

Collaboration is apparent throughout the book. The idea that two heads are better than one is apparent in this publication. These writers have created a book that is smoothly written, well organized, and full of great ideas. For those educators looking for ways to create a safe and exciting learning environment, this book is for you. For those educators who need some help with technology, this book is for you. And for those educators who are curious about what superpowers can be unleashed in your students, this book will provide information, instructions, and examples that will change the way you view your students and your role in their futures.

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