



## **THE FIRST-YEAR TEACHER'S CHECKLIST**

### **QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDY AND SCENARIOS FOR DISCUSSION**

It seems that no school district begins a new school year without at least a brief professional development in-service to help new teachers make the transition from their college years or previous careers to their challenging new profession as educators. Such in-service sessions can be immensely helpful, but not all novice teachers leave professional development workshops with the knowledge and skills that will enable them to become confident and competent educators. There are several reasons for this: the overwhelming responsibilities that all teachers assume each term, the lack of enough prior experience to make sense of the staggering amount of information each teacher is expected to master quickly, and even the exhaustion and idealism inherent in each novice.

Because of these factors, experienced educators who have the task of helping new teachers master the information they will need during the first few years of their careers should carefully structure and deliver beneficial professional development activities that can meet the needs of all novice teachers. Professional development workshops can take many forms, such as formal presentations, informal focus groups, small study groups, or even large group discussions. Determining the right mix of activities will depend on the time that has been allocated for this activity, the experience levels of the new teachers, and the leader's preferred presentation style.

One sensible approach to ensuring that all teachers have a common understanding of the material presented in *The First-Year Teacher's Checklist* is first to encourage new teachers to work through the questions in the Questions for Individual Study section of this study guide. These questions have been designed for teachers to work through individually or to discuss in small groups.

In addition, to help new teachers put into practice the information and skills presented in the book, staff developers may choose to include discussion and problem-solving sessions based on the common scenarios presented in the Scenarios for Discussion section.

Finally, if you would like to ask the author a question, make a comment, offer suggestions, or give helpful feedback, please e-mail her through her Web site, <http://www.juliagthompson.com>.

# Questions for Individual Study

## SECTION ONE: BECOME A PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR

### Chapter 1 Professional Development Begins with You

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1. After reading the three guiding principles of professionalism in List 1.1: Be Guided by the Principles of Professionalism, which of the principles included here do you find most important? Which do you believe will have the greatest positive impact on your career? Are there other principles that you would like to add?
2. As you read List 1.2: What Is Expected of You, do any of these expectations surprise you? Select five of the most important expectations and prioritize them according to their potential impact on your new profession. How will these expectations and your treatment of them affect your teaching practices?
3. What realistic professional goals can you establish for yourself this year? Use List 1.4: Set Professional Goals with These Easy Steps, to guide you as you approach the challenging task of making the best possible professional development decisions all year long.
4. On page 15 the author defines the term *best practices* as it relates to education. As you examine the list, select a practice that you would like to incorporate into your instructional repertoire and make a plan to accomplish this. What are the steps you need to take to incorporate this practice into your class?
5. After reading the lists in this chapter, what proactive steps can you take to take charge of your career and manage your professional responsibilities with confidence?

### Chapter 2 Learn to Work with Other Educators

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1. What skills do you already possess that make it easier for you to work well with your new colleagues? As you skim this chapter, review your personal strengths and look for suggestions on how to enhance the vital attributes that will help you become a valued coworker to those around you.
2. After reading List 2.5: Professional Courtesy, which of these suggestions do you find helpful as you work to adapt yourself to the culture of your new school?
3. Do you have a well-organized binder of emergency plans and information prepared in case you have to miss school? If not, use the list on page 29 to put one together. You, the substitute teacher, and your students will all benefit from this advance preparation.

4. How can you apply the advice in Lists 2.9: How to Deal with the Demands of Your Colleagues, and 2.10: Dealing with Difficult Colleagues, to work effectively with all of your colleagues?
5. Spend some time exploring the online learning communities described in List 2.11: Join Other Educators in Online Learning Communities. Which of these sites do you find helpful and appropriate for your professional needs?

## Chapter 3 Create a Link Between Home and School

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1. Why should teachers take the initiative to establish a positive relationship with the parents or guardians of their students? What can you do to create this bond with your students' families? Which of these strategies are most appropriate for the parents or guardians of your students?
2. Skim List 3.3: What Parents Expect of Their Child's Teacher. Explain why it is important to understand fully the expectations they have of you. Do any of the expectations in this list surprise you? What can you add to the list from your own experience?
3. List 3.6: Strategies for Managing Formal Conferences Successfully, contains information that can assist you as you meet with parents or guardians of your students. What are your current concerns about these conferences? What can you do to resolve your concerns?
4. As you read List 3.7: How to Handle Conflicts with Parents or Guardians, what conflicts can you anticipate? What plans can you make to resolve them?
5. Because paperwork is such an important part of any teacher's workday, List 3.9: How to Manage Student Information, deals with an issue that concerns many teachers. Do you agree with the suggestions in this list? Do you know of other methods that are also helpful? What do you need to do to ensure that the way you handle this type of paperwork is as efficient as possible?

## SECTION TWO: CREATE A POSITIVE CLASS CULTURE

### Chapter 4 Make Your Classroom a Productive Learning Environment

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1. The requirements of any learning environment will vary depending on the school, a teacher's personal preference, the subjects under study, and other factors, such as the ages and abilities of the students in the room. How can you apply the information in List 4.1: The Essentials of a Productive Learning Environment, to your teaching situation? What obstacles do you have to overcome to create the learning environment you want for your students? How will you accomplish this?
2. In List 4.3: Create a Safe Classroom, the author states that the most important aspect of a learning environment should be student safety. Identify the items in this

list that can apply to your classroom. How can you use the information in the list to make sure your students are safe at all times while under your care?

3. As you review the information in List 4.5: Create Effective Seating Arrangements, consider the factors you should attend to when you design seating arrangements for your students. What do you need to do to make sure every student is seated in the best possible spot for them in your classroom?
4. Read List 4.4: Make Your Classroom Greener by Using Paper Wisely. How green is your classroom? What is your district's paper waste policy? What can you do to accommodate your students' needs while reducing the amount of paper waste in local landfills? How can you involve students in this effort?
5. This chapter offers many free and inexpensive strategies for creating an inclusive classroom in which the decor shows students they are clearly valued while it provides indirect instruction. Which strategies appeal to you? Which ones can you incorporate into your daily routines?

## Chapter 5 Forge Positive Relationships with Students

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1. After reading the information in List 5.1: Characteristics of an Appropriate Teacher-Student Relationship, identify the measures you can take to ensure that the relationships you have with your students have acceptable boundaries while remaining mutually beneficial.
2. How can you use the information in List 5.3: The Greatest Gift: High Expectations, to establish challenging, attainable, and inspirational expectations for your students that are at the same achievable? How can you communicate these expectations to your students?
3. Think of an incident in your past when you observed a teacher treating a student with disrespect. What was the effect on the student involved? What was the effect on the other students? What can you do to ensure that you treat all of your students with dignity? Which of the suggestions in the list on page 64 will be helpful to you?
4. Identify the students in your class who struggle to find school success because they have special needs, have an attention deficit, or are reluctant learners. Which strategies from the lists in this chapter can assist you as you work to help these students?
5. Review the information in List 5.10: Make Every Child Feel Valuable, to decide how you can create a welcoming and inclusive classroom. Which of these strategies are you already using? Which can you add to your repertoire?

## Chapter 6 Create Opportunities for Student Success

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1. Carefully read the motivation principles in List 6.1: The Principles of Motivation. As you study this information, determine the priority that you would assign to

each principle. Which of them do you feel confident that you already have in place? Which ones would you like to implement in the future?

2. On page 73 the author states, “Because students will rise to their teacher’s expectations, it is crucial that those expectations be high.” How much importance do you place on a positive teacher attitude? How do teachers unconsciously convey their attitudes to their students? What are your current strengths in this area?
3. Lists 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5 are all composed of questions designed to help you motivate students by increasing their confidence, enjoyment, and sense of belonging. As you read these questions, earmark a few that can help you spark excitement and increase the opportunities for your students’ success.
4. After reading List 6.7: Suggestions on Using Rewards and Praise Effectively, determine what problems there are with using both of these techniques as motivational tools. What can you do to avoid these problems as you motivate your students to succeed?
5. On the basis of the information about intrinsic motivation you found in this chapter, which strategies would appeal to your students? How can you incorporate these strategies into your instructional practices?

## Chapter 7 **Take a Proactive Stance to Prevent Misbehavior**

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1. As you read List 7.2: Prevent Misbehavior with These Commonsense Strategies, identify which ones are already in place in your teaching practices. Which ones should you improve? Are there other helpful strategies that you find effective in preventing misbehavior?
2. In List 7.3: Avoid These Discipline Mistakes, you’ll find a list of common mistakes that teachers make. Do you recognize any that may be part of your classroom discipline practices? How can your awareness of these mistakes improve the way you manage your class?
3. Carefully planned and consistently executed classroom procedures are a critical part of a proactive stance in dealing with misbehaviors. Which of the procedures in List 7.5: Make Things Run Smoothly with Classroom Procedures, do you find necessary in your classroom? Are there other effective procedures that are not in this list that you use to keep your classroom running smoothly?
4. On page 90 the author asserts that there are many benefits to a united effort by all teachers in a school to enforce the school’s code of conduct. Do you agree or disagree? Are there rules that are particularly troublesome for some teachers at your school? If so, how do you handle this problem?
5. In List 7.14: How to Have Fun with Your Students, the focus is on enjoyment. Why is this an important part of motivation theory? Which of the activities in this list would appeal to your students?

## Chapter 8 **Minimize Disruption Caused by Misbehavior**

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1. Identify the misbehaviors you have to manage most frequently in your classroom. Which ones are the most disruptive? What strategies are currently successful? Which strategies in this chapter would you find useful?
2. Use List 8.2: Misbehaviors You Should Handle Yourself, to decide how to regard various types of misbehaviors. Why is it important to know how to categorize misbehaviors? How would you classify them? Which behaviors would you add to this list?
3. How would you rate the potential for violence in your school? As you examine the behaviors in List 8.5: Be Alert to the Potential for Violence, do you recognize any from your teaching experience? Are there any that you would add to the list? What procedures should you follow at your school if you notice students engaging in a behavior with the potential for violence?
4. How can you develop grace under pressure when students misbehave? Use the suggestions in List 8.8: Control Your Reactions When Students Misbehave, as a guide to make sure your own reactions to student misconduct are appropriate. How else can you manage your stress levels?
5. The final list in this chapter, List 8.9: Questions to Ask Yourself When Students Misbehave, implies that the teacher is responsible for many student behaviors. How does this attitude give the teacher control of a classroom? What are the advantages of this belief?

## **SECTION THREE: BE A DYNAMIC TEACHER**

### Chapter 9: Plan Effective Instruction

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1. As you read the information in List 9.1: Your Goal: An Active Learning Community, which items seem most important to the smooth running of a classroom? Select a few that appeal to you and then prioritize them according to their importance so you can plan how to implement them.
2. Why is it necessary to assess your students' prior knowledge? Use the list on page 116 as a guide to determine the strategies that are appropriate for your students. What can you add to this list?
3. What type of learners make up your classroom? Why is it important to adapt lessons to meet the needs of your students rather than have them accommodate themselves to your lesson? Why do you think the author suggests that there are only two areas of instruction to differentiate in the list on page 117? Do you agree or disagree?

4. How can you use the concept of an effective backup plan to improve your instruction? Use List 9.11: How to Create Backup Plans, to collect a variety of backup plan ideas that would be effective for engaging your students if your original plan is not working.
5. What types of activities do your students enjoy and find useful? Why is it important to have lively and engaging instruction? Choose one of the strategies in List 9.8: Include Activities That Will Appeal to Your Students, to design a lesson that will engage your students.

## Chapter 10 Deliver Effective Instruction

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1. In List 10.3: How to Build Background Knowledge, the author states, “Building background knowledge is a crucial element in instruction because it allows students to make sense of new material.” How do you help your students build background information? Which of the strategies in the list would appeal to your students? How will you implement them?
2. Several of the lists in this chapter involve making your presentations as interesting and engaging as possible. How is this a proactive step in preventing discipline problems? What types of activities do your students find interesting and engaging?
3. There are several suggestions in this chapter to incorporate technology into instruction. Which of these suggestions would benefit your students? What can you do to make using technology as user friendly as possible for your students and yourself?
4. Activities in which students collaborate in various ways can often be noisy. Which of the suggestions in List 10.14: How to Help Groups Control Their Noise Levels, would work well with your students? What tips have you observed in your own teaching experience that you could add to this list?

## Chapter 11 Assess Your Students’ Progress

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1. Which types of assessments do you use in your class? Use the information in List 11.1: Types and Purposes of Assessments, to ensure that you know how to create both summative and formative assessments.
2. Many different types of alternative assessments are available for teachers of students in all grade levels. Think of the needs of your students as you read the list of alternative assessments on page 151. How can you use the information in this list to improve the assessments you offer your students?
3. Which types of questions do you use most frequently? Use the information in lists 11.4: How to Create Beneficial Tests, 11.5: Traditional Questions Types, and 11.6: The Versatile Multiple-Choice Question, to expand the variety of question types you offer on different assessments in your class. As you read these lists, note the question types that you may not be using frequently but that could help you assess your students.

4. It is highly likely that you will have to administer standardized tests to your students at some point in your early years of teaching. What problems can you anticipate? Where can you find more information about how to make the process as pleasant and useful as possible? Refer to the list on page 159 as you determine how to handle successfully the administration of standardized tests.
5. Managing the grading of paperwork is one of the most daunting tasks any teacher faces. Which of the tips in List 11.12: Keeping Up with Grading Paperwork, seem most beneficial to you? What other strategies have you learned from other teachers that will make this task easier?

## **SECTION FOUR: LOOK TO THE FUTURE**

In Chapter 12, “Twenty-First Century Issues for All Teachers,” you will find eleven lists of recent trends that will have impacts on your educational practices for years to come. Which of these trends are already part of your school day? How can you use the information presented here to manage your professional responsibilities successfully?

## **SECTION FIVE: RESOURCES TO HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER TEACHER**

In Chapter 13, “Resources to Help You Become a Better Teacher,” you will find seven lists of various types of resources that can make your professional life easier. As you review each list, select at least one of the Web sites, organizations, periodicals, or books that could assist you in fulfilling your professional duties.

In Chapter 14, Resources to Help You Work with Students, you will find three lists of resources that are geared to helping you work well with your students. As you review each list, select at least one of the Web sites, organizations, periodicals, or books that could assist you in dealing successfully with your students.

# Scenarios for Discussion

## SECTION ONE: BECOME A PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR

### Chapter 1 Professional Development Begins with You

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1. Your school has a strict policy on the instructional materials that can be photocopied and distributed to students. Your supervisor keeps rejecting your handouts. How can you solve this problem?
2. A supervisor assigns you an extracurricular task that you can't possibly do well. You want to be regarded as a team player at your new school but you know you can't fulfill this particular responsibility. What should you do?
3. You and your students want to be responsible in how you manage classroom resources such as paper and electricity. How can you accomplish this without sacrificing a great deal of instructional time?
4. You need to maximize how efficiently you use your planning period each day. What can you do to ensure that you don't waste valuable time?
5. You have had a stressful day at school in which nothing seemed to go as you had planned. What can you do to remain confident while learning from the events of this tough day?

### Chapter 2 Learn to Work with Other Educators

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1. You just received an e-mail from your principal telling you that she will visit your classroom later in the day. Your lesson is not a very exciting one, nor is it particularly well-structured. What should you do? Who can offer advice?
2. You've been assigned to work closely with a teacher whose philosophy of education is very different from yours. In fact, you are uncomfortable working with this colleague. How can you handle this situation in a productive and diplomatic way?
3. You are having such a busy day that you forget to attend your assigned afternoon bus duty. Your duty partners are clearly not pleased about this. What should you do to manage this situation successfully?
4. Other teachers in your school allow parties right before winter break even though your school's policy clearly states that there are to be no parties. Your students beg for a party. What should you do?
5. You find that you must miss a day of school. What can you do to make the day a productive one for the substitute teacher as well as for your students?
6. You and your mentor do not have a common planning period. How can you find the time to work together?

## Chapter 3 Create a Link Between Home and School

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1. A parent objects to a book that you have assigned for your entire class to read even though you obtained administrative approval to use this particular work. How should you handle this situation?
2. One of your students is chronically late to school because a parent drops him off late many mornings. You have tried talking over the situation with the parent, but the child is still late. What should you do?
3. During a conference, the parents of an unruly student blame you for their child's misbehavior. What are some of the mistakes you should avoid as you attempt to solve this problem? Who can offer assistance with this issue? What should you do?
4. Many of your students are from non-nuclear families. You want to make sure that you treat their families courteously. What are some of the steps you can take to guarantee that your relationship is positive, beneficial, and respectful?
5. At the beginning of the school year you gather a great deal of information about your students and their families. How can you organize this information so that you have ready access to it all year?

## SECTION TWO: CREATE A POSITIVE CLASS CULTURE

### Chapter 4 Make Your Classroom a Productive Learning Environment

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1. You must share classrooms with other teachers. You have no private place to work because you share an office with other teachers. Their personal conversations make it difficult for you to use your planning period efficiently. To whom can you turn for help? What should you do?
2. Having a safe classroom is one of the most important responsibilities for all teachers. As you assess your classroom, what changes do you need to make to ensure that your students will be safe?
3. Several of your students require preferential seating. How can you arrange the furniture in your classroom so that the needs of all of your students can be met? Who can help you with this?
4. As you plan to decorate your classroom, how can you use the decorations to provide instruction as well as create a comfortable and pleasant environment?
5. You do not have enough furniture or supplies to get the school year off to a good start. What should you do? To whom can you turn for help?

## Chapter 5 **Forge Positive Relationships with Students**

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1. You believe that one of your students is hyperactive and has an attention deficit disorder, but her parents refuse to consider the possibility. What can you do to help this student be a successful learner?
2. What can you predict that your students will expect of you? How can you use this information to improve the way you reach and teach your students?
3. Several of your students are often off task. How can you redirect them while treating each one with respect and dignity?
4. You have a student who usually does very well on tests. This student failed a recent assessment and has accused you of making an unfair test. What is your goal in this situation? What do you do?
5. You want to have a positive relationship with each student in your class. How can you manage to develop appropriate relationships while maintaining your role as a caring, effective teacher?
6. It is your goal to create a classroom where every student feels included and valuable. How can you do this? Who can help you?

## Chapter 6 **Create Opportunities for Student Success**

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1. You have several students who are not motivated by the prospect of making good grades. What should you do to motivate these students to fulfill their academic potential? Who can help you with this? How can you learn more about how to motivate each student?
2. You want to move away from relying on tangible rewards to motivate your students. What are some successful techniques for building intrinsic motivation into assignments that would work well for your students?
3. Which tangible rewards have the most appeal to the students you teach? How can you use tangible rewards without spending a great deal of your own money?
4. You have a student who turns in poorly done work on a regular basis even though you have made your standards clear. What is your goal? What do you do?
5. Some of your students have made it clear that they are not interested in the subject matter you are teaching. What is your goal in this situation? What should you do?

## Chapter 7 **Take a Proactive Stance to Prevent Misbehavior**

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1. You observe a pattern of misbehavior among your students day after day. What do you believe is the cause of this misbehavior? How can you discover the reasons for your students' misbehavior and what can you do with this knowledge?
2. Two of your students turn in homework papers that are very similar. You believe that one of the students copied the other's work. However, you do not have any

proof. What mistakes should you avoid? To whom can you turn for help? What should you do?

3. You show a film to your class. Instead of watching it closely and taking notes, your students talk incessantly throughout, despite your attempts to quiet them. What can you do to prevent this problem in the future? To whom can you turn for help? What should you do?
4. You have a class filled with students who have what seem to be very short attention spans. They easily become restless and bored. What is your goal? What should you do?
5. You have serious rules and you want to enforce them, yet you are not sure when to be lenient and when to be strict. How can you determine the best course of action to take when enforcing class rules?

## Chapter 8 **Minimize Disruptions Caused by Misbehavior**

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1. You notice that one of your brightest and most cooperative students has something hidden in a book bag. You suspect that it could be an illegal drug. To whom can you turn for help? What should you do?
2. A student is late to class and makes a scene that completely disrupts your carefully planned instruction. To whom can you turn for help? What should you do?
3. A student who is normally pleasant and well-prepared is suddenly rude to you. What should you do?
4. You have bilingual students who refuse to speak the language required by your school. How do you encourage them to use the language of the school? What do you do?
5. Your students leave the class a mess every day—candy wrappers, trash, and personal materials have been thrown around the room. How can you encourage them to clean up after themselves and take responsibility for leaving the classroom tidy?
6. A fight breaks out in your class between two normally well-behaved students. What should you do? Who can help you with this?

## **SECTION THREE: BE A DYNAMIC TEACHER**

### Chapter 9 **Plan Effective Instruction**

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1. Many of the students in your class have finished an assignment earlier than you anticipated. What should you do? What mistakes should you avoid?
2. As you begin a new unit of study you become aware that your students have various levels of background knowledge about the new unit. What can you do to increase the background knowledge of all students in your class?

3. You have a class with severely mixed ability levels—from very bright to those who struggle to succeed academically. What can you do to meet the needs of the individual learners in your class?
4. Your school’s curriculum is clearly too advanced for many of your students. You know you should cover all of the material in the curriculum guide, but you don’t believe it is possible. What should you do? To whom can you turn for help?
5. Your school has recently adopted a nontraditional schedule. Even though you have attended several in-service presentations about how to adapt to the new schedule, you are concerned about how to use class time wisely. How can you plan effective instruction that keeps all students fully engaged?

## Chapter 10 Deliver Effective Instruction

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1. Your students continue to talk while you are talking. You have warned them several times but to no avail. What can you do to get their attention focused on you instead of on chatting with each other?
2. You want to assess your students’ preferred learning styles but are not sure which assessment instrument you should use. How can you find an assessment that will be effective with your students? Who can help you with this?
3. You notice that your students are bored and restless midway through the day’s lesson. How can you prevent this from happening again?
4. Although you know that you should include higher-level thinking skills in your instruction, you worry that teaching these skills will not be the most productive way to instruct your students. How can you teach higher-level thinking skills so that they enhance student engagement and retention?
5. You have a class right after lunch that is very hard to settle down. How can you help them focus and get to work quickly without raising your voice or feeling frustrated? To whom can you turn for help?
6. Several of your students have trouble completing their homework. What can you do to make sure that students complete their homework assignments?

## Chapter 11 Assess Your Students’ Progress

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1. What can you do to help the students who are not native speakers of English when they take tests in your class? Who can help you with this?
2. You want to provide your students with constructive feedback on formative assessments. What are some of the most effective ways that you can provide encouraging feedback to your students? How can you provide this type of feedback without spending hours writing comments on student papers?
3. Many of your students have poor study skills. How can you find the time to incorporate study skills into the daily routines of your class? How can you determine which skills should be a priority?

4. You notice that your students lose interest in the day's lesson before the end of class. What can you do to engage them and review the lesson at the same time? Who can help you with this?
5. Your students do not seem to perform well on traditional tests even though you spend class time reviewing with them. You feel that they know the material. Which types of assessments would be effective ways to evaluate your students' progress? How can you use a variety of assessments in your class?