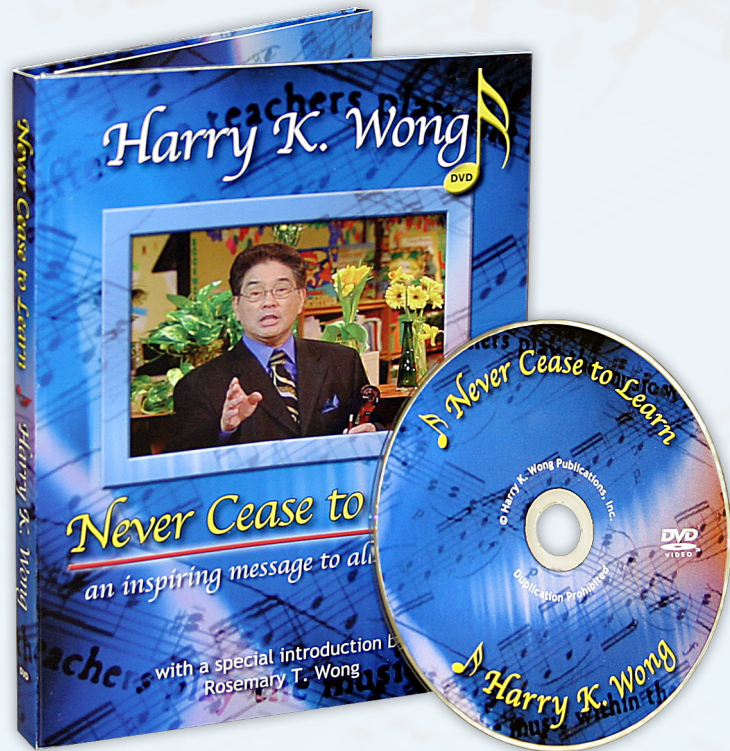




Suggested Discussion Guide for

Never Cease to Learn

with Harry K. Wong

Never Cease to Learn

Introduction

Several years ago, we were introduced to a unique and workable discussion system used when teachers, especially high school teachers, were viewing the video series, ***The Effective Teacher***. It is called the “Aha” system.

For this system we are most grateful to Kathy Robbins, superintendent of the Leyden High School District in Franklin Park, Illinois, Sandra Martin, superintendent of the Butler School District 53 in Oak Brook, Illinois, and Dean Auriemma, staff developer for the Homewood-Flossmoor High School District in Flossmoor, Illinois.

Modifying the Aha system for the CD, ***Never Cease to Learn***, it works as follows:

1. Give each person a page to take notes on.
2. At the top of the page is a brief, 3 or 4 sentence summary of the program or key idea that will be viewed.
3. With this focus in mind, participants are asked to watch the program and take Aha notes. Aha means to write down things that dawn on them as a part of reflection, thus Aha.
4. The Aha notes are meant to be ideas that are major insights that light a mental light bulb or major concepts that rattle you and cause you to reflect in your mind and heart on what you would do as you work with your students.
5. Organize groups to brainstorm their respective Ahas.
6. Finally, and most importantly, have a space at the bottom of the page that says, “What Aha will I or we implement.”

You want teachers to walk out of watching the program and discussing their Ahas to make choices about what they will change in their work with students or colleagues.

We present this Aha system to you as a possible means of leading a discussion of the CD, ***Never Cease to Learn***.

For assistance in the development of these discussion questions and activities, we sincerely thank

Dr. Judith Demko, Oak Grove School District, San Jose, California
Dr. Phyllis Lindstrom, Evergreen School District, San Jose, California
Dr. Katherine Perez, St. Mary’s College, Moraga, California

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Title and Length of Scenes

Never Cease to Learn is divided into 14 sections for easy viewing and access. This listing shows the title and length of each scene.

<u>Scene</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Title</u>
1	4:30	"Setting the Stage"
2	1:55	"The Secret to Being Effective"
3	1:28	"Learn from the Internet"
4	4:33	"The Importance of Good Habits"
5	1:04	"Ask Questions"
6	3:16	"When Things Connect"
7	0:57	"Let Them Know You Care"
8	2:35	"You Have Choices"
9	1:00	"Steal and Learn from Others"
10	1:05	"Some Habits to Develop"
11	6:26	"Go to Conferences"
12	0:52	"The Freedom to Choose"
13	2:20	"Your Impact Is Immeasurable"
14	5:53	"Thank You for Being a Teacher"
TOTAL	37:54	

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“Setting the Stage”

- 1.1 What is the music inside of you that is waiting to be played inside of your classroom or school district?
- 1.2 Explain what the phrase “Never Cease to Learn” means to you.
- 1.3 How would you define an effective teacher?
 - Develop a concept map with “effective teacher” at the core and qualities and characteristics around the central circle.
 - What is a metaphor for an effective teacher? Draw a graphic and/or symbol for it. How would you describe this?
- 1.4 What are the current impediments for you to be the “best that you can possibly be” that Harry refers to in the tape?
- 1.5 Using the analogy of music for effective teaching, if you were an instrument in an orchestra that best describes your style of teaching, what instrument would you be and why?

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“The Secret to Being Effective”

- 2.1 Describe the implications between teacher effectiveness and student achievement in your setting. What are some ways that Harry provides to make this connection more vital?
- 2.2 What are some current ways that you “steal” effective teaching strategies from others to make a difference in your classroom or school?
- 2.3 In what ways can “begging, borrowing, and stealing” from effective teachers help you become more effective? What are the implications for collegiality?
- 2.4 Harry argues that to improve student achievement, manage an effective classroom, and to have an effective school, the key is an effective teacher. How does this fit with your own educational philosophy?

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“Learn from the Internet”

- 3.1 Harry Wong says that effective teachers can make the ideas of other teachers work in their own classroom. How would this be enhanced by establishing a “community of learners” at your school site or district? Design a possible template for this action plan for your situation and share with others.
- 3.2 How might you use web-based resources to enhance your lesson designs or build a learning community?
- 3.3 Search through the articles Harry and Rosemary Wong have written for **www.teachers.net**. What new strategy did you find that would help you to become more effective as a teacher or administrator?
- 3.4 How can you prevent from becoming a teacher in the survival mode?

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“The Importance of Good Habits”

- 4.1 Describe some positive “good habits” for success in teaching that you have or that you have witnessed in others.
- 4.2 What are some ways of promoting and integrating these positive habits into your classroom, school, or district?
- 4.3 If you were to write a book like Covey’s entitled ***The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teachers***, what would those habits be and why?
- 4.4 Give some examples to your partner or group of some procedures and routines that have become habits in your classroom. How effective are these strategies? Why?
- 4.5 Evaluate some of the “habits” that you need to “un-learn” in your classroom, school, or district. What are some techniques to use to overcome these obstacles and move forward to more effective practice?

NOTE—a handout could be given to participants with two cartoon “bubbles”—1) habits of effective teaching I use, and the other, 2) habits to overcome.

- 4.6 Describe the choices you have in your personal and professional life. What do you use to guide your decision-making? What are some of the challenges that you face? Chart these and do a pair/share: Choices vs. challenges.
- 4.7 Identify some of your current teaching habits. Do you believe that you influence those habits? What is one habit that if you chose to change, it would profoundly improve your teaching?
- 4.8 According to Harry Wong, up to 90% of our everyday behavior is based on habit which is a key ingredient for successful people. Now think about your classroom and some habits or procedures that work for your students and help make them more successful. Break these habits down into sub-group areas such as:
 - Bringing the right materials to class
 - Completing homework on time
 - Organizing papers
 - Studying for tests, etc.
- 4.9 Why did you choose to become a teacher?

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“Ask Questions”

- 5.1 In reflecting on his teaching career as a professional educator, Harry states, “Success in life is not in knowing the right answers. It’s in knowing how to ask the right questions.” What questions do you have now in your stage as a professional educator?
- 5.2 Asking questions and listening are signs of an effective teacher. How will you ensure that you spend adequate time listening and asking questions?
- 5.3 What’s the difference between the teacher who says, “I can’t do that. She’s an elementary teacher and I’m a high school teacher,” compared to “I need to be authentic and true to myself.”
- 5.4 Asking questions is often seen as a weakness. How can we change this mindset so that asking questions is seen as an opportunity to learn and grow?

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“When Things Connect”

- 6.1 What are those Aha moments for you that Harry talks about in referring to Bruner’s theory of conceptual learning?
- 6.2 Harry presents a model for using a few unifying ideas. How might your lessons change by focusing on a few of the big ideas?
- 6.3 How does Bruner’s idea of conceptual learning fit into today’s model of differentiated instruction?
- 6.4 Describe some of the elements used in a “lesson mastery—not lesson mystery” approach to teaching. How can you better prepare your lessons so that students are led through a process of guided discovery learning?
- 6.5 The video talks about knowing how to ask the right questions and applying this to helping to build connections for our students. What are some of the questions that we need to ask of ourselves and our students in the subjects we teach, particularly as we examine our subgroups on our standardized test scores?

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“Let Them Know You Care”

- 7.1 Describe what you do to promote positive home-school, parent-professional partnerships of behalf of your students.
- 7.2 Harry Wong talks about a technique that he used to reach parents of high school students. His phone calls home helped motivate students to do better in school. What has worked for you or you know has worked for someone else to more closely connect parents to the school and to link the classroom learning with parent support?
- 7.3 How can classrooms be both business-like and have a warm environment?
- 7.4 What are other ways you can let your students know you care?

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“You Have Choices”

- 8.1 What are some “key ideas” for avoiding the negative influences that may be apparent in your school or district? What might be some next steps?
- 8.2 Morley Safer of “60 Minutes” said, “I have met many victims in my lifetime and most of them deserve to be the victim.” What is a victim and how do people become victims? How do some teachers become victims?
- 8.3 How can you avoid the negative influences at school?
- 8.4 Describe what you are doing to prioritize the “choices” in your life as a professional educator. How are you moving forward?
- 8.5 Describe the relationship between asking questions, making choices, and forming habits.

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“Steal and Learn from Others”

- 9.1 Harry quotes Jack Canfield by stating, “Your habits will determine your future.” Describe a time when your habit made a difference for a student.
- 9.2 Harry says that we choose our actions, our daily routines, our habits. The key word is “choose.” How do effective teachers choose to shape their own future, whereas ineffective teachers have allowed others to shape their future? Give examples of both.
- 9.3 Comment on the meaning and application of the statement: “Don’t be afraid to learn. Knowledge is weightless, a treasure you can carry easily.” How does this apply to you and your role? How does this statement relate to the choices you make as effective teachers?

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“Some Habits to Develop”

- 10.1 Comment on the piece of wisdom to Harry Potter from Professor Albus Dumbledore in ***Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets***.
- 10.2 Construct an action plan for yourself that develops one of the habits of choice that Harry articulates in the presentation. How is this going to make a difference in your life as a professional educator?
- 10.3 How would you choose to develop the habit of
 - investing in yourself to increase your value to others?
 - learning and growing as a professional?
 - avoiding thoughts and people who limit us?
 - taking small risks to create incremental growth?
 - identifying what you want to do with your life and DO IT?

Alternative: Divide the group into 5 clusters. Assign each one to discuss one of these 5 habits. Chart key points. As a jigsaw activity, have one of the “experts” from each of these groups to reconfigure into a “home group” that consists of one member from each of the expert groups to summarize and share key ideas.

- 10.4 Take a few minutes to reflect about a habit that either you would like to develop or further develop or have your students develop. Then, take about a 10 minute Quickwrite to write down this selected habit for development and potential ways or next steps that you can take to make this a positive, well ingrained, good habit.

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“Go to Conferences”

- 11.1 Share with your group the professional organizations that you belong to. What are the benefits for belonging and for attending their annual conference?
- 11.2 What are some conference “behaviors” that you recommend to first-time attendees? Share some lessons you’ve learned from attending major conferences.
- 11.3 If a first-time attendee to a conference were to ask you what to expect and how to get the most out of a conference, what professional advice would you add based on your experience and expectations?
- 11.4 Recent budget woes have caused some districts to eliminate funds for professional conferences. How might you leverage limited funds to create a supportive network for on-going learning?
- 11.5 What steps can you start taking today to “nourish yourself by constantly learning”? How will these steps enhance the quality of your life and the competence of your profession?
- 11.6 Several ways of gaining valuable research were discussed that can help us become more effective individually and collectively, e.g. attending conferences, reading selected professional books, and using ideas from others.
 - Prioritize some possible options for conferences within your school or personal budget.
 - What are some recommendations for books that you feel would be beneficial to share with others? If you don’t know any titles to share, how could you research some to share with others?
 - Think about how you have adapted some of your best ideas that you heard from others. What can we do to have a continuous option of sharing ideas with each other and from each other?
- 11.7 How is Rosa Parks an American hero?
- 11.8 What are some other ways to enhance the competence of our profession?

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“The Freedom to Choose”

- 12.1 Describe some strategies to re-direct your professional life to be driven more by choice than chance. Share these with your group.
- 12.2 As suggested in question 10.3, divide the group into 5 clusters. Assign each cluster to discuss one of the five freedoms of choice.
- We are free to choose to be the person we want to become.
 - We are free to choose our values.
 - We are free to choose how much we want to learn.
 - We are free to choose what we want to accomplish in life.
 - We are free to choose what we want to choose.

Have one member from each cluster report to a “home group” to summarize and share key ideas and how they relate to teachers becoming more effective teachers.

- 12.3 How can choice help you accomplish what you want to accomplish in your classroom, school, or district?

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“Your Impact Is Immeasurable”

- 13.1 Think back about a teacher that made a difference in your life. What qualities and characteristics did he or she possess? What habits were demonstrated on a daily basis in the classroom? What choices were made in delivering the curriculum in a more meaningful way? If you had an opportunity to meet that special teacher today—what would you say to him/her?
- 13.2 “It isn’t what we have or the techniques that we use that make us successful. It’s who we are. It’s our character. And our habits reflect our character. Our habits determine whether we will succeed or fail as teachers.” With character in mind, as well as the multiplicity of cultural backgrounds and values that we see in our classrooms and schools every day, what do you think would be five (any number) habits that reflect in our character as a teacher that we want to represent to our students on a daily basis?
- 13.3 As a paragon, what do you represent for your students?
- 13.4 If a student were to one day come back to visit you, what is the one sentence that you would like to hear said to you?

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“Thank You for Being a Teacher”

- 14.1 Michelangelo was a master sculptor when he sculpted the magnificent *David*. Take this square piece of foil and shape it into a sculpture that symbolizes an “effective teacher” to you. You have two minutes to do this as you listen to this song (ex. “A New Day is Dawning” from the end of Tape #8, “Positive Expectations” in ***The Effective Teacher***). Have each teacher share their foil sculpture and how it symbolizes an effective teacher to them. (Examples may include a bird to give wings, a hand for support, a heart for caring, etc.)
- 14.2 Harry provides encouragement and words of thanks for teachers. What habits can you adopt to ensure your “music comes from within” and that all your students have the opportunity “to play their special music,” too?
- 14.3 Some powerful data were shared about how we as a nation value in our schools every child regardless of that child’s circumstances or background. We are doing a better job of educating our children than ever before when you look at the increase in the Advanced Placement Test numbers and the percent of high school and college diplomas earned. We all should take great pride in these figures. Yet, our job is getting more complex year by year as we face new mandates and new issues as we strive to help positively impact the life of each child in our classroom. It is a miracle what we do. It is also a miracle of how well we do it—in spite of all odds.

Make a list of our school’s pride, accomplishments, and successes, not just in data but in other ways, too, and thank each other for being a key part of this awesome list.