Teaching For Success e-Mentor Program

SI-29          ## The DNA of Success

One key to success may be found in the number and quality of actions steps proposed, completed, and evaluated. A set of workable action steps constitutes the DNA of change and innovation. Tossing around great ideas in posts and discussion groups can be fun, but unless action steps result and a commitment is made to their completion, it may be all a waste of time and energy that most instructors, students, and organizations can ill afford.

Where do good action steps come from? Good action steps arise from a personal:

- Desire to improve
- Willingness to experiment and learn from experience
- Preference for doing it now
- Commitment to achieving outcomes and results
- Ability to analyze the context in which the action takes place
- Zeal for excellence, for getting it right
- Embracement of learning from failures and mistakes
- Grasp of systems thinking and knowledge of how the specific system you are working in operates
- Solid confidence in a better future and a penchant for optimism

**Good action steps have optimum:**

- Scope
- Complexity
- Definition of accomplishment and quality standards
- Accountability

The number one characteristic of a good action step is its suitability for moderately-rapid completion. The most perfectly constructed and thought-out action step is of no consequence if it never comes to fruition. Therefore, creating a step with the right scope of action is crucial. If a step is too small, you will lose interest as progress will be slow. A step whose span is too great may cause one to conclude, "It can't be done, I don't have the resources, time, or energy to complete it." It's like the Goldilocks problem, trying to find when is it just right.

Most importantly, there needs to be the right accountability built into each action step. It must be  clear who is responsible for the completion of the step, what is the deadline for completion, and how will it be known when the step is successfully completed. A part of accountability is progress management. Step completion should be tracked by:

- Crossing out an item on a simple checklist
- Making entries in a project journal, log
- Sending progress reports via e-mail, tweets, or posts to those in the class, work group, or project team

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