

FOREWORD

I wish I had had this book when I was classroom teacher. My emphasis back then was to ensure my students were willing and able to step out of their comfort zone—that’s what prompted me to create the Learning Pit. Yet, if I’d also had this latest book by Michael McDowell, then I could have helped my students contextualise and extend their learning far more effectively.

I wish I had had this book as a school leader. With it, I would have been in a much better position to develop collective efficacy across my teams. We could have also identified the most effective practices for deepening and extending student learning and then directed our energies accordingly.

So, I’m delighted to have read this book now, as the owner of a group of educational companies. The advice within it will help me lead my teams in supporting schools and districts even more effectively. We will start with the *5Cs Framework*, as this should help teaching staff and leaders develop a clearer system of planning and culture development. We will also be advocating that educators engage with Michael’s proposal to develop efficacy as a collective effort between students and staff.

The framework for developing expertise and creating a culture of efficacy will, I think, be particularly popular amongst my team of teachers, leaders, and support staff. Furthermore, the fact that Michael has underpinned all of his proposals with the most compelling research will make the book even more appealing, I’m sure.

With all that said, I think the greatest gains for my team—and therefore for the educators we work with and, in turn, their students—will be in taking up the challenge to identify the *underdog* strategies. Beautifully illustrated in this book’s introduction, underdog strategies are those that are rarely found within current habits or reverences and yet are very often the most efficacious. Examples can be found throughout this book, my favourite of which is the idea of “best fit.” As Michael says, almost every strategy makes an impact on learning,

but there are several strategies that have the highest probability of working at different levels of complexity (i.e., surface, deep, and transfer). So, the challenge for all of us in education is to find those strategies that work for the right student, at the right stage of their learning, and for the right purpose. This takes determination, open-mindedness, and professional reflection—and this book will show us all where to start.

So read on, dear colleague: Michael has given us more insight, more inspiration, and more guidance on how to improve learning for all. If that isn't worthy of our time, then I don't know what is!

—James Nottingham
Creator of The Learning Pit and
Director of Challenging Learning