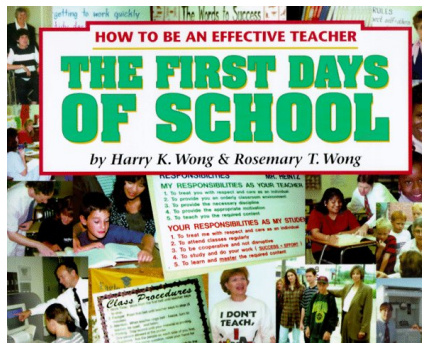


# The Four Stages of Teaching



*Harry K. Wong is an award-winning teacher with over 35 years of experience in classroom teaching. He lectures to educators and administrators around the world. His book, *The First Days of School*, has sold over 3.5 million copies and has had four editions printed. *The First Days of School* is considered by many to be required reading for first year teachers. Harry is a native of San Francisco and is arguably the most sought-after motivational speaker in education today having given some 3000 presentations to over a million people. The March 2006 issue of *Instructor* magazine named him one of the 20 most admired people in education along with Maya Angelou, Howard Gardner, and Oprah Winfrey. He has received numerous other teaching honors.*

## The Four Stages:

1. Fantasy
2. Survival
3. Mastery
4. Impact

There are four stages to teaching, yet many teachers never progress beyond the second one, survival. Which stage are you presently in? The purpose of *The First Days of School* is to get you to the third stage, mastery, so that you can make a difference in the lives of your students.

**Stage 1-FANTASY.** A naive belief of teachers is that they are infallible. They believe that to be a successful teacher, all they need to do is relate and be a friend to their students. (Success will be quick, easy to obtain, and linear.) They also believe that teaching means doing activities, especially fun activities. (These naïve attitudes quickly lead to more fantasies- this time in the form of excuses.

“I would *for sure* be successful *if only*...

1. student name is out of my class already!
2. I had the “right” textbooks instead of these books my administration gave me.
3. I had less students in my class.
4. I had different students.
5. My classroom had more space.

...the fantasies/the excuses are endless!)

**Stage 2-SURVIVAL.** Teachers are in survival when they rely on ineffective practices just to make it through the day. To them, teaching is a job, and they do it for the paycheck and vacation benefits. Teachers in survival spend much time whining about work conditions and making excuses. They find busywork for the students to do, copy notes from a chalk board or transparency, show videos. They exhibit no accountability: “I teach the stuff; if they don't want to learn it, it's not my fault.” So they come each day to put in time and baby-sit.

**Stage 3-MASTERY.** Teachers who know how to achieve student success employ effective practices. These teachers know how to manage their classroom, teach for mastery, and have high expectations for their students. Effective teachers strive for mastery by reading professionally and going to professional meetings. They teach to make a difference and exhibit accountability: “If the students are not learning, I need to find another way or discuss the problem with my peers to see if they have answers. I am an adult; I am responsible; I am a problem solver.”

**Stage 4-IMPACT.** Effective teachers are able to affect or make an impact on their students. A teacher's role is to open the door to learning. Effective master teachers know how to get their students to enter for learning. To make an impact on your students, you need to use effective teaching practices. Students learn only when the teacher has an appreciable effect on a student's life. You have arrived as a teacher when you reach this stage. You have gone beyond mastery.