

What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

Every chapter and idea in this book inspired deep reflection on how well I truly see and understand each child in my classroom. It's a transformative read for any educator eager to grow and make meaningful impact.

—Esmeralda Arcos

Sixth-Grade Teacher
Fresno Unified School District, CA

Noticing is a critical skill that expert teachers use to make decisions that move learning forward. Tyler Gilbert has explained and explored this concept in such a way that we can all develop our expert noticing skills to ensure that all students learn.

—Doug Fisher

Author and Educational Consultant

In Does My Teacher Notice Me?, Tyler Gilbert offers both a structure for conceptualizing teacher noticing, as well as practical applications for how to broaden our definition of assessment. For students to thrive in our classrooms, they need teachers who both notice their nuances, but also are constantly honing their noticing skills. This book provides teachers with a pathway to growing teacher noticing, with the ultimate goal of helping students feel seen in the classroom.

—Paul Emerich France

Educational Consultant and
Author of *Reclaiming Personalized Learning*, 2nd Ed.

Does My Teacher Notice Me? is a transformative text that takes the practice of teaching and post-assessment of student learning into a continuous cycle of inquiry, involving teacher–student interactions and proactive educator decisions.

—Ashley Grabowski

Academic Coach and Educator
Fresno, CA

This book masterfully unpacks a topic that educators often overlook—how we notice our students—and challenges us to elevate this critical aspect of teaching. With many practical tools, helpful analogies, and insights grounded in current research, it strikes a perfect balance between reflecting on current practices and taking purposeful next steps. This book effectively links the art of noticing students to research-based teaching strategies, making it an invaluable resource for educators at all levels.

—Meghan M. Hargrave

Education Coach and Consultant

Does My Teacher Notice Me? lays the foundation for educators who want to make a lasting impact on their students' lives. Tyler Gilbert gives us the tools to assist us in noticing that one-size-fits-all teaching approaches are rarely effective, and instead provides us with methods to ensure that each student learns in a way that resonates with them. This book is a great reminder for educators to stop, breathe, and focus on the little things. If you think back to your favorite childhood teacher, I am certain it will be someone who genuinely noticed you.

—Kelly Leonardo Silva

Intervention Coordinator

Merced, CA

Tyler Gilbert's book provides wonderful insights into the importance of interpersonal relationships and how compassion for our students is paramount. Acknowledging the challenges educators face while providing relevant guides for support make this a powerful resource for anyone looking to enhance their teaching practice.

—Eric Vieira

Instructional Coach

Prosper ISD, TX

Does My Teacher
NOTICE ME?

To *Arielle*, *Bodhi*, and *Mia*—who sacrifice the most
for me to be able to do the work I love so deeply



Does My Teacher
NOTICE ME?

Transformative Practices That
Affirm and Accelerate All Learners

TYLER GILBERT

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About the Author

“In everything I do, I believe in challenging the status quo, thinking differently, and inspiring excellence.”

—Tyler Gilbert



Tyler Wayne Gilbert is an instructional coach for a large Central Valley of California district, an education consultant, and a San Diego State University doctoral student pursuing an Ed.D. in educational leadership. He is dedicated to helping all learners feel seen, heard, valued, and, most importantly, *noticed* through research-backed practices and intentional

instructional design. Tyler was a former elementary educator. He currently supports sites, leaders, individual teachers, professional learning communities, instructional leadership teams, and climate and culture teams. He is also a member of a personalized learning initiative. Tyler loves being an educator and aspires to share that passion with others.

Note on Research and Language

This book is about building students up and ensuring equity for all learners, which requires teachers to notice and affirm their students. I began this project long before the words were ever written, with the mindset that all children deserve equitable education that promotes opportunities for them to reach their greatest potential. Compiling research that aligns with this mindset and the concept of *teacher noticing* with objectivity requires extensive amounts of time, precision, and a willingness to accept that knowledge and approaches are continuously changing for the betterment of education as a whole. With that being said, I strived to approach the structure and language use in a way that has long-lasting relevance and objectivity. To the best of my abilities, I used gender-nonconformity language. Moreover, I tried my best to use the pronoun *they* when referring to individuals. However, there are a few instances where I used the pronoun *she*. In addition, there are instances when referring to students' demographics, I used governmental terminology (e.g., *socioeconomically disadvantaged*, *minority*, *second language learner*, etc.). I know that this language is not the most acceptable regarding equity, but I used it because they are widely used and familiar words. In Chapter 6, I discuss gifted students and pedagogy in support of such students. When I refer to gifted students, I am talking about students who exude gifted behaviors that may or may not have permanence. Lastly, there are moments throughout the book where I used *novice teacher* and *novice noticer* synonymously. In the same way, I use *expert teacher* and *expert noticer* interchangeably. The reason is that noticing abilities are a direct indicator of teaching expertise.

The book does not reflect or support discrimination based on age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, or disability. Also, this book is characterized by honesty and openness. With that being said, please give me grace if there are any moments I have offended you or anyone with my approach and language use, as that is not my intent. My goal is to speak and provide a compassionate framework for expert teaching that creates the best possible outcomes for all students.

Introduction

“To be able to understand people and be present for them in their experience—that’s the most important thing in the world.”

—Mary Pipher (Clinical Psychologist and Author)

Excellence in teaching is critical for student success. Empathy for students and being present *with* them in their learning experience are the most important things a teacher can do. Affirming a student’s thinking and adapting the learning in the moment to support and advance their understanding is the greatest act of compassion. This act of compassion is called *expert teacher noticing*.

Noticing – etymology tracing back to Latin words *noticia* (being known) and *notus* (known)

The Case for Compassion

Teaching is hard. Teaching really well is profoundly difficult. How can you balance compassion for your students with effective pedagogy? A global pandemic, economic disadvantages, academic gaps, chronic absenteeism, increasing demands, new initiatives, and lack of administrative support can make it feel like the profession, as we know, needs more career sustainability. Now more than ever, it is imperative for teachers to demonstrate compassion.

Of course, empathy is vital for good teaching. Feeling *with* your students can be substantial. Nevertheless, too much of it can be a problem, weighing you down. Instead of carrying the burden of empathy, you can learn to experience compassion. This is a massive shift in how teachers engage with their students, dramatically benefiting everyone in the classroom, including the teacher. It starts with understanding the difference between empathy and compassion.

Empathy and Compassion: *What Is the Difference?*

The words *empathy*, *compassion*, and *sympathy* are sometimes used interchangeably. Sympathy means feeling *for* another, while empathy means feeling *with* another. Even though they all represent positive, altruistic traits, they do not refer to the same phenomenon. There are two distinct qualities of compassion: understanding another's feelings and the willingness to act and support those feelings. Compassion goes beyond empathy.

Teaching with *just* empathy makes it impossible to consider the greater good. Empathy can not only help us do the right thing but also motivate us to do the wrong thing. It can distort or cloud our judgment, encourage bias, and make us less effective at making pedagogical decisions. However, empathy should be considered. A teacher without empathy is like a car without gas—it simply will not engage. Empathy is vital for connecting with our students; then, we can leverage the gas to teach with compassion.

Even with empathy's many benefits, it can be a poor guide for teachers. Research by Paul Bloom, professor of cognitive science and psychology at Yale University, sheds light on how empathy can distort our judgment. Through logic and clinical studies, Bloom concludes that empathy can result in biased decision-making and hyper-focus on an individual versus a group of individuals. For example, through empathy, I might be willing to help someone handsome but not somebody who is repulsive, frightening, or lacks personal hygiene. Also, empathy zooms in on one individual but does not attend to the difference between one student and 30 students. In other words, empathy makes us often care more about a single student versus 30 students or one and 100.

How do you tap into your students' possibility of growth and transformation? Avoid the trap of empathy and teach with compassion. Shifting from empathy does not make you less kind; it makes you better able to support students during the challenges they may endure in and out of school.

There are five key strategies for using empathy as fuel for teaching with more compassion.

1. **Take an emotional step away.** Instead of getting emotionally drained when one of your students struggles, try taking a step back. You can gain a clearer perspective

by taking an emotional and mental step away. With this perspective, you can better help, support, or advance learning. It may seem like you are being unkind, but you are stepping away to help solve the problem.

2. **Ask what your students need.** When you ask your students the simple question, “What do you need?” you initiate a solution to their challenge by allowing them to reflect. This will better inform your next pedagogical moves. Also, this will help your students feel heard and seen and increase a sense of belonging in the diverse classroom.
3. **Know the power of non-action.** Teachers are generally good at getting things done. However, when it comes to students with academic or social-emotional challenges, it is important to remember that you only need to give students some solutions. Instead of always providing solutions, students need your clarity, ear, and caring presence. Many challenges just need to be heard and acknowledged. In this way, taking “non-action” and allowing students to drive can often be the most powerful means of supporting and advancing students.
4. **Coach your students so they can find their own solutions.** Teaching is not about solving problems for your students. It is about growing and developing young minds, empowering them to solve their problems. Coach your students and mentor them. Show them how to find their pathway and their own answers.
5. **Show self-compassion.** Self-compassion happens by practicing self-care. We know that putting all our energy into managing our students’ emotions comes with the cost of mismanaging our own feelings. It’s called emotional labor—when we absorb, reflect, and redirect other people’s feelings so much that we become overwhelmed. Hence, as teachers, we must practice self-care: take breaks, do not work on the weekends, sleep, exercise, eat healthy foods, cultivate meaningful relationships, and practice mindfulness and gratitude. We must consistently find ways of staying grounded, in tune with ourselves, and resilient. When we show up to teach with these qualities, students can lean on us and find support and comfort in our presence.

Compassion is the underlying thread for efficacious teaching. A student's brain responds more positively to teachers who show compassion. Creating a compassionate culture in the classroom can lead to lower emotional exhaustion, lower student absenteeism from school, and greater academic success.

“Leadership is not about being in charge. Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge.”

—Simon Sinek

Like Simon Sinek's philosophy on leadership, schooling aims to take care of students in our charge so that they become their own leaders and self-directed learners. This does not mean focusing solely on curriculum and

test scores. Instead, the purpose of schooling is to create, through compassion, a village of scholars who learn sufficient foundational skills to be well-rounded, collaborative critical thinkers and make decisions for personal endeavors and contributions to the larger society.

Teacher Efficacy

The way teachers THINK matters. A teacher must believe that all students can learn and bring assets to the classroom, that she has the efficacy to facilitate student success, and that reflection and refinement of teaching practices are necessary. A teacher's mindset and ways of thinking, interpreting, and evaluating are fundamental to their students' academic success. It is this thinking that leads to instructional decision-making. This thinking determines lesson planning, choice of interventions, creation and explanation of learning objectives and success criteria, noticing when students have sufficient understanding and when they do not, deciding when and how to scaffold, and choosing when and how to advance learning. It is not an exhaustive list, but you get the point.

Teacher Noticing

Noticing things is a common and essential part of teaching. The simple definition of noticing is *observing or paying attention to something*. There is no debate that teachers observe and pay attention to things (e.g., Tommy is consistently seven minutes late, Myra looks more tired than usual, Michael wears the same sweatshirt daily, Natalie made an error in doing order of operations while evaluating the expression, and I NEED coffee).

However, most teachers do not notice a great deal, either because they are not attuned, their attention is preoccupied elsewhere, or they realize they need to pay attention to some other features in the classroom. Effectively noticing is complex and challenging.

Clarity Is Crucial, Clarity Is Kind

Teacher clarity is fundamental for effectively noticing in the classroom. Students need to be able to answer the following questions for clarity to be achieved: “*What am I learning today?*” “*Why am I learning this?*” and “*How will I know when I am successful?*” Teachers must have a clear goal extracted from a standard and written in a student-friendly way. Students must have access to this goal. In addition, teachers and students must clearly understand what success looks like regarding a given learning goal. Criteria for success can take different forms, but some examples are *I can* statements, rubrics, exemplars, models, and teacher think-aloud. For teachers to notice students’ understanding with precision, there must be a goal and success criteria to reference that understanding. Without this reference, you do not have something viable to notice.

Clarity is kindness. Things are clear when students know what they are expected to learn, how to successfully achieve the learning goal, and who their teacher really is. When there is a lack of clarity in the classroom, this creates a culture of confusion and distrust. Students are left in the dark when the teacher does not share the details. Thus, clarity is a trust builder. Trust is essential for students to share their thinking; transparency of thought is fundamental for accurate teacher noticing.

The Target

This book came to fruition because noticing, a critical component of teaching expertise, has been overlooked and underdiscussed. Teachers with a high level of expertise in noticing promote student engagement and learning more effectively. Therefore, a deeper understanding of teacher noticing is necessary for improving teaching and learning. The following chapters define the characteristics and components of teacher noticing and provide reliable guidance for teachers seeking to go from good to great and become

expert noticers. They shed light on the skills, knowledge, and dispositions it takes to be an expert noticer.

What is happening during those high-quality, in-the-moment adaptations in the lesson? The discipline of teacher noticing is a collection of techniques for preparing to notice in the moment and reflecting on recent instruction to refine for future teaching experiences. Understanding the following components of expert noticing will help answer this question:

- ▶ Going from a novice to an expert noticer: the continuum of noticing (Chapter 1)
- ▶ Checking for thinking (Chapter 2)
- ▶ Creating a Village of Scholars (Chapter 2.5)
- ▶ Anticipating student thinking and being proactive and responsive (Chapter 3)
- ▶ Scaffolding (Chapter 4)
- ▶ Feedback (Chapter 5)
- ▶ Advancing beyond the learning goal (Chapter 6)

This book aims to help teachers adopt compassion and a posture toward their students, a different way of being present with them, and a different way of having more meaningful conversations that lead their students to successful learning experiences. Teaching this way can yield the most profound sense of fulfillment.



What Is Teacher Noticing?

Where do great teachers look in a classroom full of students? What do they see? And what sense do they make of what they see? These questions are relevant to all teachers, but this book will focus on *noticing* as a component of teaching expertise.

Teacher noticing is the ability to detect and empathize with a student's perspective of thinking. It is the art of seeing students deeply and objectively and being deeply seen. It means accurately interpreting a student's visible or verbal thinking as an indicator of their steps to understanding and misunderstanding, then deciding and following it up with an appropriate action to elevate or advance that student's learning experience or knowledge. Teacher noticing is not at all a passive process. Instead, teachers who demonstrate noticing expertise are like directors in the instructional movie they observe. They think fast and teach smart.

Teacher noticing is the ability to detect and empathize with a student's perspective of thinking.

Example of Teacher Noticing

Scenario (Sixth-Grade Class):

- ▶ Learning Intention:
 - I am learning how to write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas with relevant content (6.W.2).
- ▶ Success Criteria:
 - I can create a topic sentence to restate the question/prompt.
 - I can use my prior knowledge and relevant details from the text to respond to all parts of the question/prompt.
 - I can cite relevant text evidence to support my response.
 - I can elaborate and explain how the text supports my response.

Writing Prompt:

Compare and contrast Plato's and Aristotle's perspectives on government. Cite text evidence to support your response.

Teacher 1:

1. *Observes* a student putting her head on the desk.
2. *Makes sense* of this event and infers that the student is being lazy.
3. *Decides* to dismiss the student to focus on students who are, in fact, engaging in the work.

Teacher 2:

1. *Observes* the student working; the student suddenly stops working and puts her head on the desk.
2. *Makes sense* of the event by inferring that the student is struggling and needs support.
3. *Decides* to walk over to the student and prompts her by saying, "I see that you started your response; what might be your next step?" The student responds, "I don't know." The teacher responds, "You have success criteria that break down the steps. I notice that you have done the first two steps. What is the third step?" The student states the third step: "Cite relevant text evidence to support my response." The teacher smiles and says, "You've got this." The student continues working.

We have all likely been in a classroom where we were, experienced, or saw Teacher 1, Teacher 2, or someone between the two. These are typical interpretations and decisions that teachers make. However, they differ vastly, especially in the student's receptivity and productivity. Teacher 1 is a prime example of a teacher with limited noticing skills. It is likely that the student stayed disengaged and was ultimately not entirely successful in that learning experience. Teacher 2 is an example of an expert noticing teacher. This teacher attended to the event appropriately and made accurate sense of the situation by inferring that the student needed support. Then, the teacher made an effective decision to support the student's learning and did it immediately.

Three Phases of Noticing

Teacher noticing is a practical, behavior-oriented approach to teaching. You may have noticed in the example that teacher noticing has distinct phases. What teachers attend to, what they make sense of, and what decisions they make significantly affect students' learning experiences. Teacher noticing, also known as responsive teaching, has three interrelated phases (Jacobs et al., 2014):

1. Attending
2. Interpreting
3. Deciding

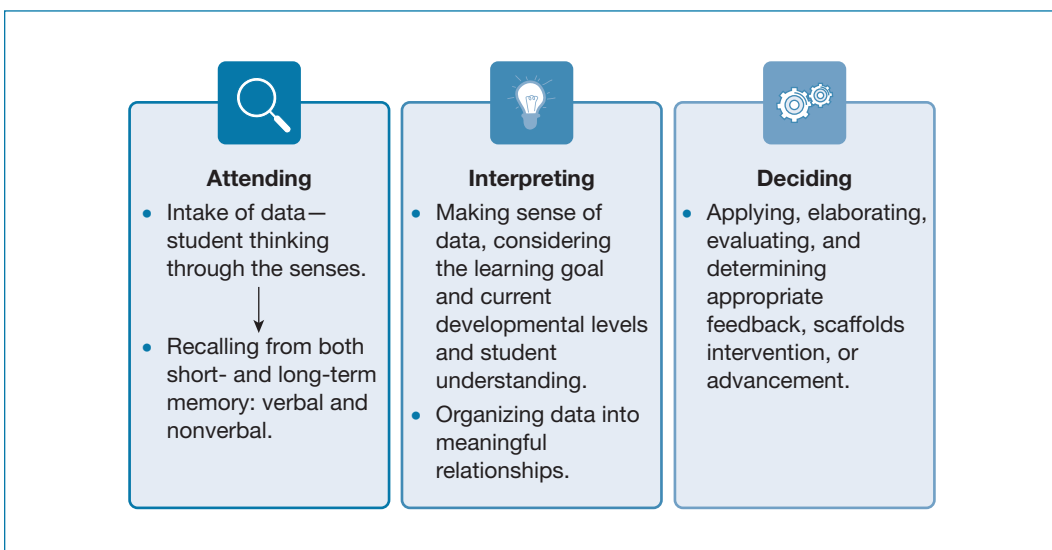
Attending involves noting evidence of thinking and understanding. This phase requires teachers to be curious about their students. Genuine curiosity requires teachers to suspend judgment and all they *think* they know. The attending phase can include noticing something as subtle as a student's body language, how they manipulate a pencil or other classroom tool, excessive noise-making, or a tangible digital or physical product of thinking. The list of things a teacher can attend to is almost infinite. However, the goal is to attend closely to actions most significant to students' thinking related to the learning goal. We will talk about the art of intentionally attending to things and intentionally *not* attending to things later.

Look back at the example and notice what each teacher initially observed. What is the difference? Teacher 1 only noticed the student putting her head on the desk. Teacher 2 observed the reason *why* the student put her head on the desk. Understanding *why* things happen in the classroom significantly increases the likelihood of making effective instructional adaptations.

Interpreting involves comparing the observed evidence with current knowledge about the discipline development in a particular area. In the midst of interpretation, the teacher considers what they observe, thinking about the learning goal, success criteria, and the development of the specific content area. In the example, Teacher 2 immediately made sense of where the student was in relation to the learning intention and success criteria. Teacher 2 attended and interpreted the student's actions as they related to the learning goal.

Deciding refers to the execution of an effective response to the interpretation of the student's current thinking and understanding. This phase deals with thoughtful decision-making. Of course, many instructional decisions would likely help support or advance students, but the goal is to decide on a productive pathway. In the example, Teacher 1's decision did not support or advance the student. It actually did the opposite. Teacher 2 prompted the student by leveraging the success criteria. This allowed the student to reflect, determine the next step, and persevere. Figure 1.1 represents the interrelated phases of teacher noticing.

Figure 1.1 Teacher Noticing Mind Map



The Three Phases, Empathy, and Compassion

In the introduction, we delineated the distinctions between empathy and compassion, asserting that teacher noticing is the most profound act of compassion a teacher can do. To elucidate this concept, we explore the three phases of noticing: attending, interpreting, and deciding.

Empathy is paramount in the attending phase. Teachers must connect with their students' experiences and truly notice their thoughts and feelings. This phase involves feeling alongside students, fostering a deep understanding of their perspectives.

As we transition to the interpreting and deciding phases, the focus shifts from empathy to compassion. Here, teachers must interpret students' thinking accurately and make informed decisions that benefit their students. This process demands a balance of objectivity and action. Compassion in this context requires stepping back, assessing the situation objectively, and taking appropriate action.

In essence, compassion is the synthesis of empathy and action. By combining empathetic understanding with decisive action, teachers possess the potential to expertly notice and embody true compassion in their practice.

Two Main Processes of Noticing

Noticing in the classroom has two main cognitive processes. The first process is attending to particular events in an instructional setting using sensory data (e.g., sight and sound). To manage the complexity of teaching, teachers must actively choose where to focus their attention and what not to focus on. The second process is making sense of events in an instructional setting (e.g., metacognition). Teachers interpret what they observe and categorize or characterize what they see into familiar instructional episodes. These two processes of teacher noticing are interdependent and continuous (Jacobs et al., 2016).

Decision-Making

“The best decisions aren't made with your mind but with your instincts.”

—Lionel Messi

Talented decision-making is one of the hardest things to acquire. It is not something you simply turn on like a light switch one day. Moreover, more is needed to make the right decisions at the right time while teaching. Teachers must perceive signals from students' outputs and register that an opportunity has arisen. Then, the teacher has to act on this information and decide to respond or not respond. This means the teacher has to look for specific cues while simultaneously executing the complex task of teaching a lesson. This requires coordination.

It is an obvious point, but a teacher must first *see* and *hear* things quickly and effectively to be able to *decide* quickly and effectively. You must tune out the noisy signals of unimportant information and recognize the important signals as a window of opportunity to support or advance student understanding. Effective decision-making requires copious amounts of practice.

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

Expert noticing is a collection and repertoire of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that work synergistically to allow oneself to notice present and future opportunities to act consciously in favor of students' growth and understanding. Expert noticing produces insights and informed action in thinking, teaching, and learning. The first skill is proactiveness. A teacher must proactively anticipate how students might use strategies, think, conceptualize, or misconceive as they engage in the lesson. Then, the teacher must create opportunities for students to visibly or verbally expose their thinking, which will be discussed in Chapter 2. Another skill that a teacher must leverage is student background knowledge and ways students learn, to provide options or routes to meet the learning goal. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidelines, differentiated instruction (DI), blended learning, and personalized learning provide excellent tools and frameworks for doing so; these will be discussed in Chapter 3. Lastly, the teacher must have prepared questions, responses, protocols for feedback, and scaffolds to intervene when students misconceive and advance when students understand, ideas that will be discussed in Chapters 3 through 6.

Teaching is a tremendously abstruse activity. There are many variables. Expert noticers are as much distinguished by what they *do not* notice as by what they do notice. A skilled teacher is someone who has learned to ignore features of teaching that are unimportant and attend to important things. In addition, skilled

teachers pay close attention to each student's thinking and understanding while following through with a lesson. This involves systematic scanning of student patterns. Ultimately, skilled teachers are quicker at identifying misbehaviors, lack of understanding, depth of understanding, and disruptive activities that require intervention or advancement.

Expert noticers are as much distinguished by what they do not notice as by what they do notice.

Mediator of Thinking

In many ways, an expert noticing teacher is a mediator of thought, namely, a cognitive coach for her students. A mediator of thinking is devoted to fostering resourcefulness in others. This is precisely what expert teachers do with their students: build up resourcefulness in them. In addition, this type of teacher mediates their students' thinking as often as possible so that their students become more insightful into when and how they learn. Table 1.1 lists a mediational teacher or cognitive coach's specific skills, capabilities, beliefs, values, and commitments.

Table 1.1 Mediator of Thinking

Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is skilled at constructing and posing questions and tasks to engage and transform thought • Employs objective and nonjudgmental responses to establish and maintain trust and intellectual engagement • Uses nonverbal and verbal cues to develop and maintain rapport with students
Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has clarity of intentions for learning segments • Sets aside unproductive patterns of listening, responding, and inquiring about students • Adjusts own style preferences and instruction to support or advance student thinking • Navigates within and between mental models to guide their interactions and decision-making
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person's perception determines their behavior. • Change in perception and thought is required to change behavior or understanding. • Humans construct meaning through reflecting on experience and interacting with others. • All students can grow and learn.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believes in self-directed learning • Assists students in becoming more autonomous and self-driven learners • Works to enhance individual differences, styles, beliefs, preferences, culture, and gender
Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is committed to focus on learning, not teaching • Resists complacency • Is dedicated to serving the students • Strives to bring consciousness to student thought and understanding

Source: Adapted from Costa and Garmston (2015).

Acquiring the Synergy

You learn to notice by noticing. It is a truism, but what makes it a truism is that it is true. The only way to learn to see things accurately and objectively and make quick quality decisions is to force yourself to notice important things regularly, reflect on that noticing, and self-modify. If you worked for a newspaper or blog requiring you to write two or three articles daily in a year, you would be a much better writer. You would not necessarily be writing well, but you would be significantly better at gaining confidence in your ability to arrange words meaningfully. It is the same for noticing.

Novice and expert teachers differ significantly in their noticing abilities. The novice noticer might create a great lesson but needs more awareness or attention to how students grasp the learning. This is typically someone who just reads through the prescribed curriculum, focuses on managing behaviors, and dominates the limelight and talk time. An expert noticer provides appropriately adapted instruction to students' assets and needs with immediacy in the moment and makes decisions based on student-centeredness. This ability is not necessarily determined by years of teaching but is practiced and developed over time. GREAT teachers have this ability. Table 1.2 shows the gradient from novice to expert noticer.

Table 1.2 The Continuum of Noticing

NOVICE NOTICER	EMERGING NOTICER	FOCUSED NOTICER	EXPERT NOTICER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher-centered decision-making. • The majority of time is spent focused on classroom management. • A second priority of effort is engaging students in the learning activities. • Little to no effort is focused on listening and attending to students' thinking. • May check for understanding but does not differentiate the lesson based on student data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces time spent focusing on classroom management because structures and routines are established. • More proficient at engaging students in learning activities. • Shifting perspective to listen and attend to students' thinking. • Checks for understanding and may provide differentiated instruction to support some students' understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal effort is spent on classroom management because of solid structures and routines. • Creates meaningful and engaging learning activities based on students' learning preferences and background knowledge. • Students' thinking is the primary focus during the lesson. • Uses observations and data to make decisions and adjustments to support or advance student understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-centered decision-making. • Promotes a robust community of learners and teacher that support one another. • Creates meaningful and engaging learning options based on students' learning preferences and background knowledge using the UDL Guidelines. • Proactively anticipates students' thinking and provides opportunities for students to share thoughts throughout the lesson. • Uses student thinking to drive in-the-moment adaptations to support or advance student understanding.

The continuum's purpose is to assess one's abilities, a colleague's abilities, and determine a pathway for advancing noticing adroitness to superior levels of expertise. The best way to assess the current level of competency is to have a video recording of a

lesson or have a colleague, coach, or administrator observe and take notes. Doing both will get the most objective placement possible. Observing yourself, peer observation, and observing colleagues can elevate noticing abilities. I strongly encourage all three.

The most significant shift from novice to expert noticing involves a shift in perspective from teacher-led to student-centered. This involves going from monitoring teacher actions to focusing on learning, student thinking, and teacher and student activity. Instead of focusing on delivering a lesson correctly, notice

The most significant shift from novice to expert noticing involves a shift in perspective from teacher-led to student-centered.

the effects of pedagogy on student understanding. This enables opportunities for immediate and impactful shifts in the lesson and later reflection on important features of a lesson that were effective and less effective.

Mindset Traps for Diminishing Noticing Abilities

Several mindset traps diminish a teacher's ability to become an expert noticer.

1. **Egotism**, or being too self-centered. Egotism happens when a teacher is not curious enough about their students. Often, this is the same teacher who talks way too much and gives little to no time for students to collaborate and discuss.
2. **Anxiety**. Anxiety spreads when you have too much noise going on inside your head, so much so that you cannot hear what is going on inside others' heads. Anxiety is the enemy of open dialogue. Open dialogue is essential for expert noticing. There are a plethora of reasons why a teacher might have anxiety (too many to list), but the point is that anxiety is a mindset trap that diminishes a teacher's ability to see outside themselves, namely, to see their student's thinking accurately and objectively.
3. **Naive realism** is the idea that how you view the world is objective, and students must have the same view. This trap results in a lack of appreciation for students' viewpoints. It is hard to say how this mindset arises, but we most likely

have all experienced someone in this trap. This is typically someone who does not listen to others very well and often talks over others with little to no awareness.

4. **The lesser-minds problem** is the belief that your life and mind are much more complicated and exciting than your students; thus, your students' minds are lesser than yours (e.g., "They are just eight years old, what do they know? They have not experienced anything yet."). Falling into this trap results in not seeing the true potential of students. The expert noticing teacher sees all students as having an infinite potential.
5. **Objectivism** involves thinking through broad generalizations. This leads to the teacher viewing things through the lens of the whole class and not individual students, which is limiting. The expert noticer focuses on the thoughts and emotions of each student, not just data about the larger group. Novice noticers often fall into this trap because they have not made the shift in perspective yet.
6. **Essentialism.** Essentialism is similar to objectivism and is the belief that students in one group are more alike than they actually are (e.g., "This is my group of non-readers.") There are many skills required to be able to decode and read, meaning that a "group of non-readers" is insinuating that all the students in the group are missing the exact same phonemic awareness or phonics skills. It is possible but unlikely.
7. **Static mindset.** A static mindset never updates the models of how they see their students. In other words, people constantly change, but the static mindset keeps the initial perspective they had on the student (e.g., In August, "Johnny does not know his math facts." In March, "Johnny does not know his math facts.").

We are human and most likely have all fallen into one or more mindset traps at one time or another. This section aims to raise awareness of the traps so that we can be cognizant of when we are falling into one or more and make our way out of the trap.

Conclusion

Teacher noticing is an act of compassion crucial for enhancing teaching and learning in the classroom. Demonstrating expertise in *noticing* does not happen by accident. Being proactive, consciously attending to things, making sense of student thinking, and acting objectively and immediately benefit students. The *continuum of noticing* allows you to reflect and recognize your strengths, areas for growth, and a pathway to expert noticing. Lastly, being cognizant of mindset traps can help you avoid them.

The next chapter will discuss what it means to make students' thinking visible. We will explain the requirements for checking and accessing students' thinking, provide examples and templates for accessing students' thoughts easily and promptly, and discuss the necessary components for building and sustaining a classroom full of visible and verbal thinkers.



Questions for Reflection and Action

- ▶ What are the three phases of teacher noticing, and how do they support instructional decision-making?
- ▶ Why is it important to attend to student thinking?
- ▶ How do you make sense of your students' thinking?
- ▶ How do you know when an instructional decision is a good one?
- ▶ When have you fallen into a mindset trap while teaching? What happened? How did it hinder your success?
- ▶ Where do you currently land on the continuum of noticing?
- ▶ What are specific actions you can take to advance toward expert noticing?