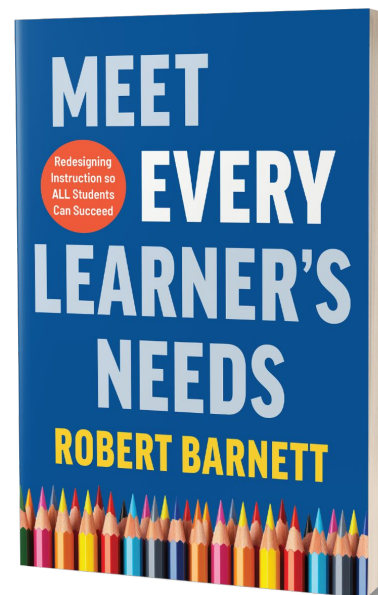


# Book Study Guide: *Meet Every Learner's Needs*

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**The Modern Classroom movement began when I invited my colleague Kareem Farah to visit my classroom.** That sparked a series of discussions about the common challenges we faced, and the solutions that worked for both of us. I am proud to say that those conversations continue to this day!

These conversations, however, have grown infinitely richer in recent years, as educators from schools and communities around the world have joined in. Today, these educators are asking the same things that Kareem and I asked all these years ago:



- What do my learners actually need?
- How can I provide that, within the day-to-day constraints I face?
- What steps should I take now to prepare my students for what lies ahead?

More importantly, these educators are answering these questions every day, as best they can - and putting their answers into practice to empower the young people they serve. Their classrooms are not perfect - nor was mine or Kareem's - but they are unlocking young people's infinite potential every day.

Whether you've read [\*Meet Every Learner's Needs\*](#) or not, I invite you to join in those conversations - and to join a community of dedicated educators worldwide who strive to meet every learners needs.

I'm glad - and grateful - that you're here.

Sincerely,

Robert Barnett  
Co-Founder, Modern Classrooms Project

P.S. Interested in leading a book study with your colleagues? Bulk-purchase discounts of up to 45% are available - [request more information today!](#)

## Book Study Objectives

By reading and discussing [Meet Every Learner's Needs](#) - and the Modern Classroom model in general - you will:

- ❑ **Develop a deeper understanding** of self-paced, mastery-based instruction, recognizing both the challenges it addresses and the solutions it provides.
- ❑ **Identify concrete steps** you can take to adopt Modern Classroom practices in your own classroom or community, to meet *your* learners' needs.
- ❑ **Connect with colleagues** who can support and encourage you in launching a Modern Classroom of your own.

You can meet as many or as few times as you desire. One meeting is plenty! If you have the time, however, I recommend that you meet three times - once to discuss each part of the book:

1. [Redesigning Lessons](#)
2. [Redesigning Courses](#)
3. [Redesigning Instruction](#)

These meetings can happen in person, online, or anywhere else comfortable. Wherever and whenever you do meet, please take a picture and email it to [meeteverylearnersneeds@gmail.com](mailto:meeteverylearnersneeds@gmail.com). Every month, I'll offer a free virtual workshop to a randomly selected group of educators who submit a picture!

Finally, if you're looking for action steps to take while discussing this book, I encourage you to download my free [Modern Classroom Implementation Guide](#).

## Part 1 Discussion Questions: Redesigning Lessons

The key to a classroom that meets every learner's needs is a lesson structure that keeps every student appropriately challenged, and appropriately supported, every day. Once you can deliver a single lesson that engages students at all levels of understanding - whether they are in class or not - you can build from there, to a full Modern Classroom.

### **To help you design lessons that meet every learner's needs, I encourage you to:**

- ★ **Choose one question per chapter to discuss** - whichever you find most interesting. If you'd like, you can break into small groups to discuss all three.
- ★ **Let the discussion flow!** The richest conversations are rarely too structured.

### **Chapter: The Challenge of Lessons**

- A. What do the various learners in your class actually need?
- B. Do you ever feel frustrated when delivering traditional direct instruction? If so, why - and what might make that easier?
- C. Think back to your own time as a student. How did you experience the lessons you received? Where did those lessons help you succeed, and where did they fall short?

### **Step 1: Digitize Direct Instruction**

- D. What experience, if any, do you have with instructional videos? How have those experiences made you feel?
- E. What do you see as the greatest benefits of digital direct instruction? What do you see as the greatest costs?
- F. What concerns - logistical, practical, or otherwise - do you have about digitizing direct instruction?

### **Step 2: Get Learners Working Together**

- G. Where do your students currently succeed in working together? Where do they struggle?
- H. How can you foster a culture of organic collaboration?
- I. What do you see as the greatest challenges for collaboration in a Modern Classroom lesson - and how will you address them?

### **Step 3: Sit Down With Your Students**

- J. What type of instruction do you most enjoy providing? What do you enjoy the least?
- K. How do you typically decide whether to provide explanations and or support whole-class, in small groups, or one-on-one?
- L. What kind of instruction do you find most effective for helping your students succeed?

### **Step 4: Require Mastery**

- M. To what extent do you currently require your students to achieve mastery? What have been the benefits and drawbacks of this approach?
- N. What experiences do you have - as a learner and/or an educator - with revision and/or reassessment? What were those experiences like?
- O. What do you feel is the ideal grading policy? Why? And to what extent is this policy possible in your current school environment?

## Part 2 Discussion Questions: Redesigning Courses

Once your lessons meet your learners' needs, you can create fully self-paced courses, which put learners in control and help each learner master as much as possible in the time available.

**To help you design courses that meet every learner's needs, I encourage you to:**

- ★ **Choose one question per chapter to discuss** - whichever you find most interesting. If you'd like, you can break into small groups to discuss all three.
- ★ **Let the discussion flow!** The richest conversations are rarely too structured.

### **Chapter: The Challenge of Courses**

- A. How much pressure (if any) do you feel to "get through" content? Where does this pressure come from, and how does it make you feel?
- B. Think back to your own time as a student. When did the pacing of your courses work well for you - and when didn't it?
- C. Is it good/fair/reasonable to expect every learner in a given class to learn the same things in the same amount of time? Why or why not?

### **Step 5: Help Learners Set the Pace**

- D. For how long do you think your students are capable of pacing themselves before a whole-class reset? Why?
- E. What of your content do you consider it absolutely essential for students to master? What feels non-essential? And how hard is it for you to make these classifications?
- F. What concerns - logistical, practical, or otherwise - do you have about self-paced learning?

### **Step 6: Develop Sustainable Systems**

- G. How do you currently use your LMS? How well do you think it works? What do you and your students like about your LMS, and what would you change?
- H. What routines do you currently have in place that can support self-paced learning? What routines will you need to modify and/or design anew?
- I. How can you organize your classroom so that students can learn as independently as possible, with minimal direction from you?

### **Step 7: Track and Communicate Progress**

- J. What systems do you currently use to track what students do and do not yet understand? How well do these systems work?
- K. Do you prefer individual systems for progress tracking (checklists/maps), whole-class trackers, or a combination of both? Why?
- L. Tracking and communicating progress takes time and effort. How can you make this process as efficient as possible?

### **Step 8: Inspire Students to Excel**

- M. What motivational strategies have you found to be most effective with your students?
- N. How will you motivate students like David, if they get ahead? How will you motivate students like Anna and Troy, if they fall behind?
- O. How can you encourage your students to reflect on their personal growth?

## Part 3 Discussion Questions: Redesigning Instruction

The ultimate goal of the Modern Classroom movement is not just to create better lessons or courses, but to transform the instruction our young people receive, from their first to their last days of school. Once you understand how Modern Classrooms really work, you can take what you've learned and contribute to this larger effort too!

### **To help you design instruction that meets every learner's needs, I encourage you to:**

- ★ **Choose one question per chapter to discuss** - whichever you find most interesting. If you'd like, you can break into small groups to discuss all three.
- ★ **Let the discussion flow!** The richest conversations are rarely too structured.

### **Chapter: The Challenge of Instruction**

- A. When it comes to school, how do your students feel about learning? How do they feel about themselves? And what experiences have prompted these feelings?
- B. What do you see as the greatest challenges facing our school system today? Why?
- C. Is age-based promotion a good idea? Why or why not?

### **Step 9: Prepare to Launch**

- D. When and how do you plan to implement the things you have learned about Modern Classrooms?
- E. How will you explain this approach to your learners?
- F. What will you do to keep your own workload manageable?

### **Step 10: Build Buy-In**

- G. What do you see as the greatest benefits of this approach? How will you communicate them to relevant stakeholders?
- H. How can you involve students, families, and/or administrators in making your classroom better?
- I. What pushback do you anticipate, and how do you plan to respond?

### **Step 11: Empower Your Colleagues (Should-Do)**

- J. Beyond this book study, how will you share Modern Classrooms with your community?
- K. How comfortable do you feel coaching and/or receiving feedback from your colleagues? What can you do to become more comfortable?
- L. What support do you need - from your school, from MCP, or from elsewhere - to empower your colleagues?

### **Step 12: Shape the Conversation (Aspire-to-Do)**

- M. How will you find the time and autonomy you need to implement and refine this approach in your classroom?
- N. What can your school or district do to place a greater emphasis on student understanding?
- O. What other policy changes do you want to suggest? To whom will you suggest them, and how?

## Next Steps: After Your Book Study

Learning how Modern Classrooms work is just the beginning of your Modern Classroom journey. Once you launch, you can continue to learn and grow - and share what you've learned with the Modern Classroom community as well.

If you're feeling ready to go further, you can:

- ❑ **Use the book's [Implementation Guide](#)** to identify action steps that you can take to launch your own Modern Classroom.
- ❑ **Connect with Modern Classroom educators worldwide** through MCP's [Facebook Group](#) and [virtual events](#).
- ❑ **Pursue leadership opportunities with MCP**, including certification as a [Distinguished Modern Classroom Educator](#) and [sharing Modern Classrooms with your community](#).

And remember - I want to hear from you! Once you've met as a group, please take a picture and email it to [meeteverylearnerneeds@gmail.com](mailto:meeteverylearnerneeds@gmail.com). Every month, I'll offer a free virtual workshop to a randomly selected group of educators who submit a picture!

I hope you enjoyed this book study guide!

-Rob



### About the Author

Robert Barnett taught math, computer science, English, social studies, and law, at public and private schools in the U.S. and Switzerland. He co-founded the [Modern Classrooms Project](#) with Kareem Farah in 2018. He is a two-time TEDx Speaker ([2018/2024](#)) and has written for several national publications.

To learn more and contact Rob, visit [rsbarnett.com](https://rsbarnett.com)