

# **HOW FULL IS YOUR BUCKET?**

**A Guide to Applying  
the Five Strategies  
for Staff Development**

## HOW FULL IS YOUR BUCKET?

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## How to Get the Most Out of This Guide

- Make this guide yours. Tear it out. Copy it. Write on it. Make the Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket a part of your everyday interactions, not just something you do on isolated occasions. The more you and your staff adopt these concepts, the more you will all begin to use a common language about positive recognition. The power of that connection will become evident.
- Get out there with this book as your guide and interact with people. Bring it to your staff meetings; tape activity pages to your bathroom mirror. Make notes of what works in the margins of the book. Make recognition a part of your daily life, and it will transform your world.
- Discuss the bucket and dipper concepts with your staff/team. Encourage dialogue about each activity. For many people, this intentional focus on the power of recognition and the factors that motivate others is exactly what they need to move from concept to application.
- This guide will provide you and your staff with suggestions and tips to integrate bucket-filling strategies into your team's work and culture. Suggested content and activities are provided. The back of each page contains tips for presenting the content, facilitating discussion, and leading activities with your staff.
- Adapt the activities in this guide to your staff. These activities can be modified as necessary to make them relevant and salient for your staff.

Rely on the content in *How Full Is Your Bucket?* and the *Bucket-Filling Semester Curriculum* for more examples and discussion ideas. Encourage your staff members to read the book and introduce bucket-filling principles into their classrooms.

## **The Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket**

- Each of us has an invisible bucket. It is constantly emptied or filled, depending on our daily interactions with others. When our bucket is full, we feel great. We are productive. We make a positive impact on those around us. When it is empty, we feel down. We are deflated.
- Each of us also has an invisible dipper. When we do or say things that increase positive emotions in others, we use that dipper to fill their buckets. Conversely, when we are negative, we use that dipper to decrease others' positive emotions by dipping from their buckets.
- A full bucket gives us a positive outlook and renewed energy. Every drop makes us stronger, more optimistic, and more resilient.
- An empty bucket poisons our outlook, saps our energy, and undermines our will. That's why every time someone dips from our bucket, it hurts us.
- But this works both ways. When we fill others' buckets, our bucket is also filled. And when we dip from others' buckets, our own bucket is emptied in turn. So we face a choice every moment of every day: We can fill one another's buckets, or we can dip from them. It's an important choice — one that profoundly influences our relationships, productivity, health, and happiness.



## Strategy One: Prevent Bucket Dipping



### TURN THE NEGATIVE INTO A POSITIVE

#### What is bucket dipping?

Bucket dipping is when you say or do something to or about someone that is hurtful — or even when you neglect to do something that would have filled someone else's bucket.

#### How can you prevent bucket dipping?

- Teach colleagues what bucket dipping is.
- Call attention to bucket dipping and bucket filling.
- Promote ideas about how to fill buckets.
- Reward bucket filling throughout your team and culture.

## Flip IT!

#### What is bucket filling?

It is more than recognition. It involves relationships, time spent in meaningful activity, and providing experiences that help others know that they matter and their lives are meaningful.

#### How can you encourage bucket filling?

- It is important to note that people can fill their own buckets and should take responsibility for doing the things that make them feel good. We are at our best when our buckets are full.
- Moments matter. Each moment is an opportunity to either fill someone else's bucket or dip from it. Make each moment count.
- What fills one person's bucket is often different than what fills another person's bucket. Make sure you ask each person what fills his or her bucket so your bucket filling is individualized.

## Strategies and Tips



### STRATEGY ONE: PREVENT BUCKET DIPPING

This strategy helps us understand that others' emotions affect our environment. Positive or negative interactions make a difference for all of us, not just the people sharing the moment.

- Sometimes, we fill others' buckets without even knowing it. Likewise, we may dip out of buckets before we notice what we've done.
- Ask your staff to relate some real-life bucket filling and bucket dipping experiences:

**Step 1:** Tell staff members to write down some specific actions that dip from their personal buckets. Then, have them write down some specific actions that fill their buckets.

**Step 2:** Ask each person to relate one or two of the actions to the group. As individuals describe the actions, ask them to share some of the consequences. (How did it feel? What happened as a result?)

- Ask your staff members if they have ever participated in a "dip-in." A "dip-in" is when we collectively dip from someone else's bucket. Instead of one dipper emptying our bucket, there are several. It's a tempting way to release stress or make sense of a difficult situation, but it leaves everyone with a less-full bucket than when we started.
- To prevent bucket dipping, we must first become aware of the importance of every moment.

**Tip:** On page 72 of this book, we describe a process for *scoring your interactions*. To expand on this discussion, have your staff members reflect on their last few exchanges with others. Ask them to grade each interaction, assessing whether it was positive or negative. Score each one with a plus sign or a minus sign.

**Focus:** Raising awareness about the notion of positive energy brings the Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket to life. Help your staff draw parallels to how we act now and the potential benefits of having more positive interactions.



## Strategy One: Prevent Bucket Dipping

Do  
IT!

### MAKE EVERY MOMENT COUNT

Think about the memorable moments you have experienced in the past 90 days. What moments stand out for you? In the boxes below, draw pictures or symbols to illustrate the given scenarios. Then, revisit each box and write the initials of all of the people who were part of that experience, whether they were part of creating the moment or a product of your experience.

*We experience approximately 20,000 individual moments every day, but we don't remember every single moment. We remember those moments that have either a strong positive or negative effect on us.*

**A time when something I said or did made someone else feel good:**

**An interaction that made me want to do better work:**

**Key players:**

**Key players:**

**A moment that made me feel discouraged:**

**An inspiring moment at work or at home:**

**Key players:**

**Key players:**

## Strategies and Tips



### STRATEGY ONE: PREVENT BUCKET DIPPING

Ask your staff to relate real-life bucket filling and bucket dipping experiences:

**Step 1:** Individually, draw pictures or write examples to illustrate each of four different situations:

- a time when something they said or did made someone else feel good
- an interaction that made them want to do better work
- a moment in which they felt discouraged
- a moment that inspired them

Then ask them to re-examine each description and write the names or initials of those who were part of the experience, whether they were part of creating the moment or a product of the experience.

**Step 2:** Ask each person to share one or two examples with the group. As they describe an experience, ask them to share some of the consequences. Help them to differentiate the types of interactions that create positive or negative experiences or reinforce the power of positive experiences and interactions.

**Step 3:** Dive deeper into the implications from the first situation: “A time when something I said or did made someone else feel good.” Ask staff members to think about how they felt when providing this positive experience to others.

Relate a personal story that illustrates this vital component to the Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket: When we fill others’ buckets, our bucket is also filled. And when we dip from others’ buckets, our own bucket is emptied in turn. So we face a choice every moment of every day: We can fill one another’s buckets, or we can dip from them.

**Focus:** There is power in our interactions with others. When we fill someone else’s bucket, ours is filled as well. But when we dip from someone else’s bucket, it can potentially affect several people. Reinforce the idea that each of us has the ability to fill someone else’s bucket. And when we fill other people’s buckets, we also fill our own.

## Strategy Two: Shine a Light on What Is Right

Do  
IT!

### CREATE LISTS OF THOSE WHO DID

- Instead of making a list of which colleagues are causing problems, make a list of those who are making a positive difference.
- Instead of making a list of which colleagues have not volunteered to help you with an activity, make a list of those who did.

This intentional effort will reinforce what you and your team deem as important and valuable.

Do  
IT!

### WRITE WEEKLY THANK YOU NOTES

Things happen every week that deserve thanks. Noticing and taking the time to say “thank you” is a good habit, and this alone can change the culture of the team, school, and organization. It may seem simple, and that is the key. If you need help identifying acts that deserve recognition, make notes to yourself throughout the week. Then set aside five minutes on a specific day to write thank you messages.

Do  
IT!

### NOTICE WHAT PEOPLE DO WELL

Take time to count, rank, and measure success. Be a success scout. We all need to be recognized as individuals and to feel a sense of accomplishment. Be alert to and track the successes of others. Find ways to recognize others and congratulate them on their victories. By maintaining a focus on what is going well, you will fill buckets throughout the organization.

Do  
IT!

### SHARE THE WEALTH

Keep an eye out for bucket fillers in your school and organization. Who is always there to say thank you? Who is your resident cheerleader? Reinforce their goodwill by mirroring their gratitude. If they write notes to others, write a note to them. If they make an effort to greet people by name, return the favor. Plugging in to your champions of positive emotion will play to their strength, and the good feelings will multiply.

## Strategies and Tips

### STRATEGY TWO: SHINE A LIGHT ON WHAT IS RIGHT



Gallup's research continues to validate that leaders and teams who fail to deliberately use the power of positive feedback not only handicap their own effectiveness, but they also diminish the power of their colleagues and teams.

At any given school or organization, it's not uncommon to have fewer than one in three colleagues strongly agree that they have received recognition or praise for doing good work in the last seven days. Fewer than one in three!

This strategy introduces the ripple effect of bucket filling. *Every time you fill a bucket, you are setting something in motion.*



#### **Try this interactive activity to jump-start the day with your team.**

To do this activity, you will need paper plates and colored markers for each person.

- Step 1:** Give each person in the group a paper plate and something to write with. Ask group members to write the name they like to be called in the center of the plate.
- Step 2:** Sitting in a circle, pass your plate to the person on your right. You should now have someone else's plate in your hands.
- Step 3:** Write a specific, brief example on this person's plate of something he or she has done well. You can use stories or just descriptive words or phrases that explain the great things about this person.
- Step 4:** Continue to pass the plates around the circle until your plate comes back to you.
- Step 5:** Challenge every person on your team to fill someone else's bucket after your meeting adjourns.

## Strategy Three: Make Best Friends



### FOCUS ON YOU

Use this chart to get to know your colleagues on a deeper level. Bring it with you to meetings and other staff events.

Name	Hobbies and special interests	One talent or strength you have (e.g., something people say you are good at)

## Strategies and Tips

### STRATEGY THREE: MAKE BEST FRIENDS



This strategy is about the importance of knowing and caring for people on a deeper level. *Become the person known for noticing when others do a great job.*

Below are some questions you might use to foster a discussion with your staff about this strategy and some ways to build a trusting environment.

<b>Questions to Foster Discussion:</b>	<b>Some Ways to Build a Trusting Environment:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can you think of a time when you depended on someone else from our team for success?</li><li>• How do you help make our work environment positive and productive?</li><li>• What characteristics does a best friend have? Why are these important at our school/organization? What happens to a team that is lacking these relationships?</li><li>• What suggestion do you have for upcoming events that could help everyone on the team get to know one another better, build stronger friendships, and have fun together?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learn the names of everyone you see regularly.</li><li>• Take time to sit down and talk with colleagues during lunch or on breaks.</li><li>• Discover specific tactics for filling each other's buckets.</li><li>• Encourage your team to celebrate special events with one another (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries).</li><li>• Challenge your colleagues to team trivia — a fun way to get to know more about each other.</li></ul>



Kick off a meeting with the “Focus on You” activity. Ask people in your group to share their answers to each of the questions with one other. A great Focus on You takes no more than the first 10 minutes of your meeting and brings everyone together on a personal level prior to engaging on a professional level.

## Strategy Four: Give Unexpectedly



### CREATIVE WAYS TO GIVE UNEXPECTEDLY

Bucket filling doesn't have to be formally scripted or planned. Some of the most memorable bucket filling happens in fleeting moments when we run into someone spontaneously or when a parent, spouse, or significant other comes home after a long day at work.

#### CREATIVE WAYS TO GIVE UNEXPECTEDLY

- Give “drops” or thank you notes for things you notice or appreciate (a sample drop is provided with this guide).
- Give your time. Spend time with a colleague who has asked for your help, attention, or advice.
- Give public praise. Find opportunities other than award ceremonies to praise someone in front of others (but be sure the person likes public praise).
- Give by listening carefully and remembering that the things that other people say are important to them. Then act on something they mentioned.
- Give others credit for contributions they made to work, activities, or programs.

## Strategies and Tips

### STRATEGY FOUR: GIVE UNEXPECTEDLY



This strategy is about being surprisingly kind.

Anyone can fill buckets by recognizing when others have been helpful or have done outstanding work. This positive energy can lead to an entire shift in culture, where everyone is noticing and recognizing quality efforts.

- We often think positive recognition comes only from supervisors or managers, but Gallup has found that people cherish praise and recognition from peers. The best praise and recognition may not always come from the top down — it may come from a peer.
- The environment you and your workgroup create significantly affects the entire culture of recognition, praise, and achievement. Recognition is everyone's responsibility. And better, more frequent recognition happens when more people are empowered to do the recognizing.



**Try this interactive activity to introduce this strategy.**

Ask your staff to write down their answers to the following questions:

1. If I gave you an extra 30 minutes in your day to honor someone else, what would you do? Whom would you celebrate?
2. What are three things that went right recently? Who was a part of those things?
3. What free gifts have you received from others? Think about things like rides to the airport, time spent listening, or the secretary who took your mail to the post office.
4. Think of three people who have made your universe even the slightest bit better in the past week. Write each one of these people a short note or "drop" and deliver it to him or her.



## Strategy Four: Give Unexpectedly

Do  
IT!

### HOW TO WRITE A DROP

Drops are handwritten, personal messages written on drop-shaped notecards. They're a simple way to share kind words with others, give unexpectedly, and fill someone's bucket.

## Drops Should Be Individualized, Specific, and Deserved.

Drops that are not deserved dilute the impact of the drops that are deserved. No one enjoys a hollow compliment. Drops allow you to recognize even the smallest contributions or improvements.

Anyone can give a drop as long as it is individualized, specific, and deserved. And anyone can and should be responsible for writing drops.

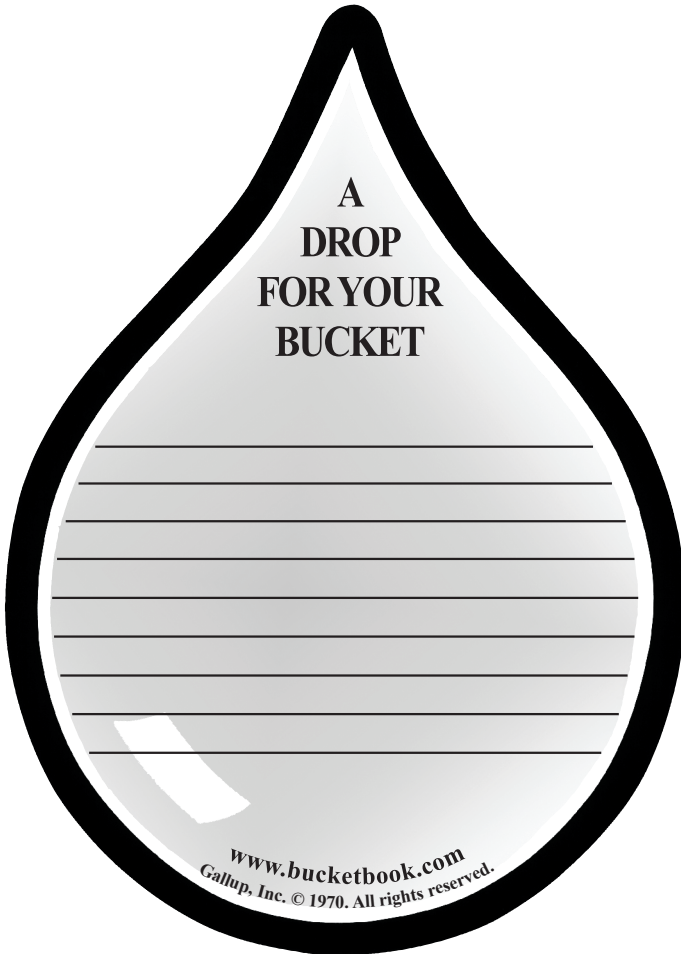
### *How to Write a Meaningful Drop*

1. Date it.
2. Use the name the person prefers to be called.
3. Be specific and brief.
  - What do you want the person to smile about when he or she reads the drop?
  - What did this person do that deserves recognition?
  - Remember that great recognition is specific, individualized, genuine, and NOW.
4. Sign it.

## HOW FULL IS YOUR BUCKET?

### **A Drop**

Specific, Individualized, and Deserved



## Strategy Five: Reverse the Golden Rule



### INDIVIDUALIZE YOUR APPROACH

**DON'T:**

**Do for others what you would like**

**DO:**

**Do for others what THEY would like**

How you like your bucket filled may be very different from how others like theirs filled. It is important to spend time thinking about yourself, what you like, and what others like. Thinking about the specific kind of recognition you prefer may be a new concept for you — and many people. It may take a bit of individual reflection as well.

The only way you can be sure you are right about what fills other people's buckets is to ask them. You can certainly watch them and carefully try to decode their behavior, but the only foolproof method is to ask and not assume. Learning about what fills the buckets of the people around you is a powerful way to transform the culture of your team, school, and organization.

## Strategies and Tips

### STRATEGY FIVE: REVERSE THE GOLDEN RULE



This strategy is about being proactive. Bucket filling is not about you. It's about them. Honor others the way they want to be honored.

Make it personal! If you want people to understand that you value their contributions and that they are important, the recognition and praise you provide must have meaning that is specific to the individual.

Below are the building blocks of effective recognition.

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**Individualized:** • Recognize that each person has a unique set of motivational factors.  
It resonates with the individual. • Begin by understanding the best motivation for each of your colleagues.  
• Identify how they want to be recognized, what they want to be recognized for, and how you can make the recognition special and unique to them.

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**Deserved:** • Pay attention to performance.  
Praise excellence. • Take time to count, rank, and measure success.  
• Find ways to recognize and congratulate your colleagues' victories.

---

**Specific:** • Clarify what specific results or actions you are recognizing.  
Specificity creates meaning. • Talk about the impact.  
• The recognition you provide will be more meaningful and motivating if it is deserved, and if the reasons for the recognition are clear.

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**Timely:** • Delayed praise or recognition can take the fizz out of the celebration.  
Immediacy underscores value. • While recalling the success at a later date can be motivating, sharing it with the colleague in a timely fashion can be constructive because the colleague will be able to relate it to a specific incident.  
• Deliver praise while the picture of the action or task (and what it took to accomplish it) is clearly in mind.

## Strategy Five: Reverse the Golden Rule

Think  
IT!

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR BUCKET FILLED?

### What Fills Your Bucket?

RATE EACH ITEM USING A + FOR PREFERRED AND  
A - FOR NOT PREFERRED. YOU CAN USE AS MANY +  
AND/OR - AS YOU NEED.

#### HOW TO TELL ME

- Tell me in front of a large group
- Tell me in a written note
- Tell me one-on-one
- Tell me in front of my family, friends, or significant other
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### HOW TO SHOW ME

- Show me with a gift certificate
- Show me with a new title or greater responsibility
- Show me with a dinner certificate I can use  
with my family, friends, or significant other
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### WHO NEEDS TO KNOW

- My peers need to know
- My boss needs to know
- My superintendent needs to know
- My family, friends, or significant other needs  
to know
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Strategies and Tips

### STRATEGY FIVE: REVERSE THE GOLDEN RULE



At a staff meeting, ask your colleagues how they best like to be recognized.

- Step 1:** Ask your colleagues to think for a moment about all the recognition they have ever received. “What moment of recognition or praise meant the most to you? What is the BEST recognition you have ever received?” Let this memory play out in their minds for a moment.
- Step 2:** Ask your colleagues to share their stories. Consider asking each colleague to describe what specifically made this recognition so special. Ask if they could think of five words or phrases to describe how they felt when they received this praise or recognition.
- Step 3:** Relate that methods of recognition and bucket filling resonate differently and carry different values to each person. We even have preferences when it comes to the type of delivery. Some people like to receive recognition and praise in public, while others prefer to receive it in a one-on-one setting.

Ask your colleagues to evaluate how they like to be recognized by completing the How Do You Like Your Bucket Filled? worksheet. Have them share their answers with each other. Consider making copies of each person’s worksheet and distributing these to the entire group.

**Tip:** Follow up on this activity by asking staff members to think of someone they know and consider how that person would like to be recognized.

With this understanding in mind, have them write this person a short note or “drop” and deliver it to him or her.

## Strategy Five: Reverse the Golden Rule

Do  
IT!

HOW DO OTHERS LIKE THEIR BUCKETS FILLED?

### Individualize

NOW THINK OF SOMEONE YOU KNOW. RATE EACH ITEM USING A + FOR PREFERRED AND A - FOR NOT PREFERRED. YOU CAN USE AS MANY + AND/OR - AS YOU NEED.

#### HOW TO TELL ME

- Tell me in front of a large group
- Tell me in a written note
- Tell me one-on-one
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