

RESISTANCE IS FERTILE

PRODUCTIVE RESPONSES TO
STUDENT PUSHBACK

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RESISTANCE IS FERTILE

- What is resistance? What does it look like?
- Why do students resist learning?
- What are our assumptions and choices about how to respond?
- 5 strategies for lessening student resistance

WHAT IS RESISTANCE?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Lack of preparation
- Unwillingness to participate
- Limited attendance
- Lack of eye contact
- Questioning in class
- Complaining about assignments or learning tasks
- Open rebellion



WHY DO STUDENTS RESIST?

- Limited autonomy on their learning (parents, mandatory requirements)
- Limited autonomy on their learning (course design)
- Lack of clarity about purpose
- Outside factors (family issues, job, relationships)
- Peer influence
- Perceived conflict with prof, program, institution, education, the world



WHY DO STUDENTS RESIST?

- Confusion about expectations
- Fear of being unable to master the content
- Content feels too easy
- Previous learning experiences
- Lack of confidence
- Active learning is uncomfortable
- Misperceptions about the most effective way to learn



WHAT ARE OUR ASSUMPTIONS?



WHAT ARE CHOICES?

- Ignore the problem
- Keep pushing forward and, by doing so, wear the students down. (Resistance is futile!)
- Hope that the students finally “get their act together”
- Demand respect
- Perceive it to be a problem of “classroom management” and student behaviour
- Complain to colleagues, other students, family, the world.



WHAT IF STUDENT RESISTANCE
WAS THE KEY TO THE SOLUTION
RATHER THAN THE PROBLEM?



OPPORTUNITY

“OUR ACTIONS MAY BE IMPEDED [. . .], BUT THERE CAN BE NO IMPEDING OUR INTENTIONS OR OUR DISPOSITIONS. BECAUSE WE CAN ACCOMMODATE AND ADAPT. THE MIND ADAPTS AND CONVERTS TO ITS OWN PURPOSES. THE OBSTACLE TO OUR ACTING. THE IMPEDIMENT TO ACTION ADVANCES ACTION. WHAT STANDS IN THE WAY BECOMES THE WAY.”

— Marcus Aurelius, 170 AD

5 STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMING STUDENT RESISTANCE

- Show students the evidence. Start with why.
- Embrace evidence-based, learning-centred pedagogy.
- Build metacognitive skills with formative assessment.
- Make (your) learning and teaching visible.
- Celebrate the challenge.

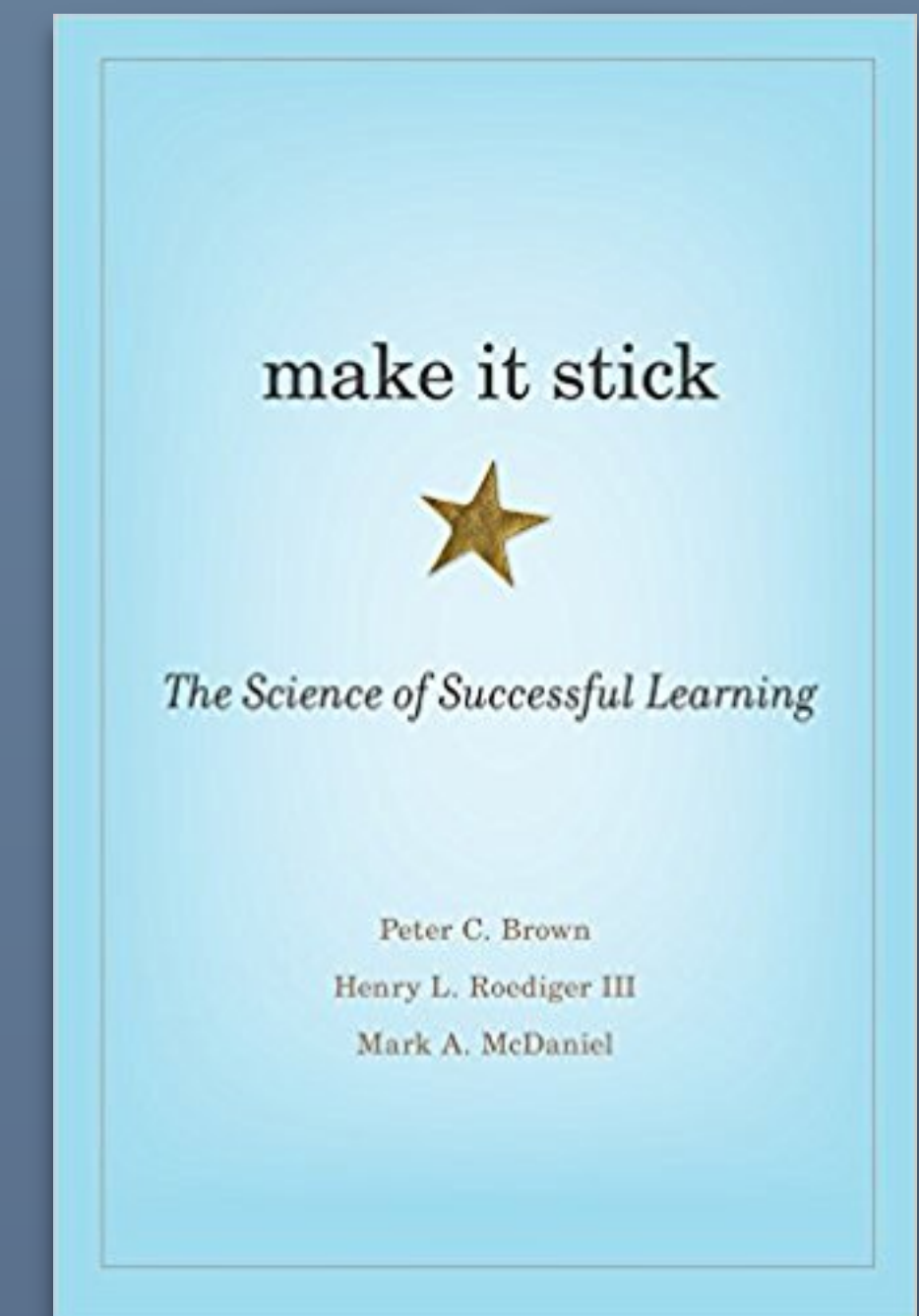
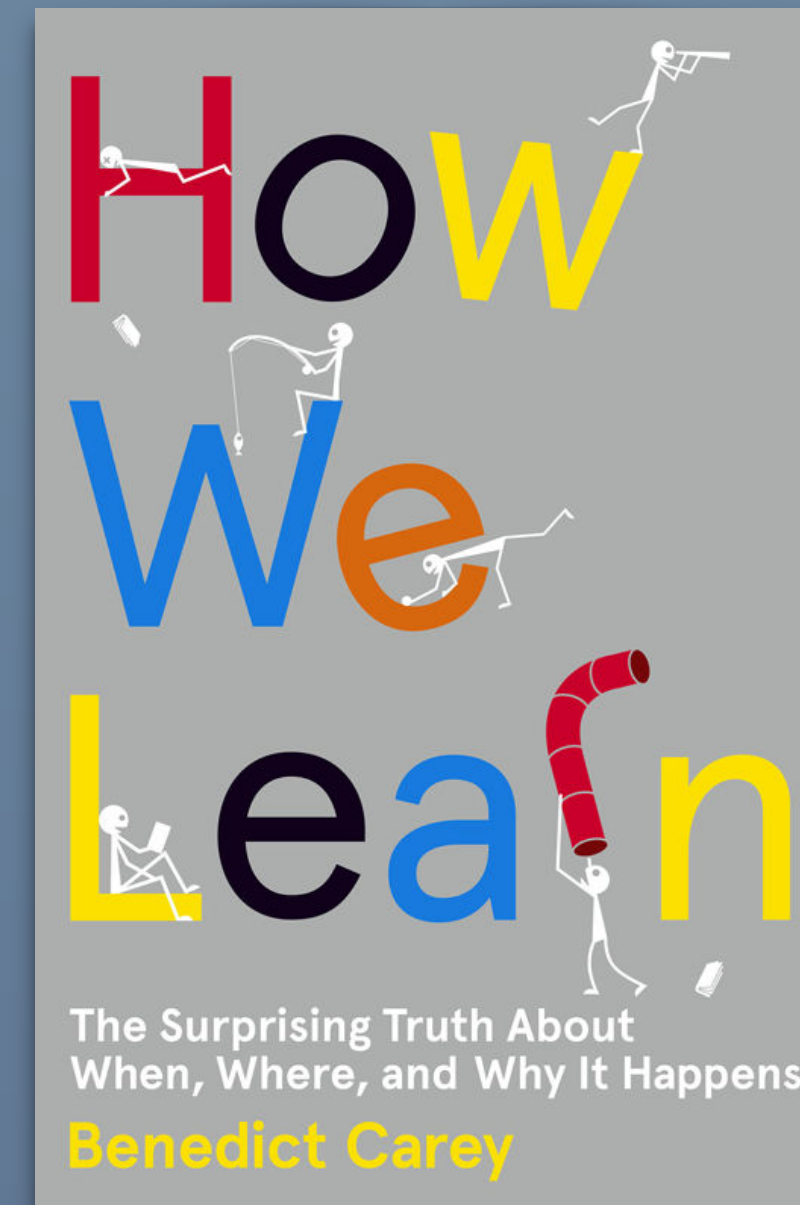
BUILDING A GROWTH MINDSET

- *Mindset* by Carol Dweck
- Growth mindset vs. fixed mindset
- Trying and failing and trying again is far more beneficial than trying and succeeding every time.
- Share your own failures. Model the growth mindset in your teaching and learning.
- The most important thing you can do for your students. Period.
- Reflect on areas in which you have a fixed mindset (perhaps about student resistance?)



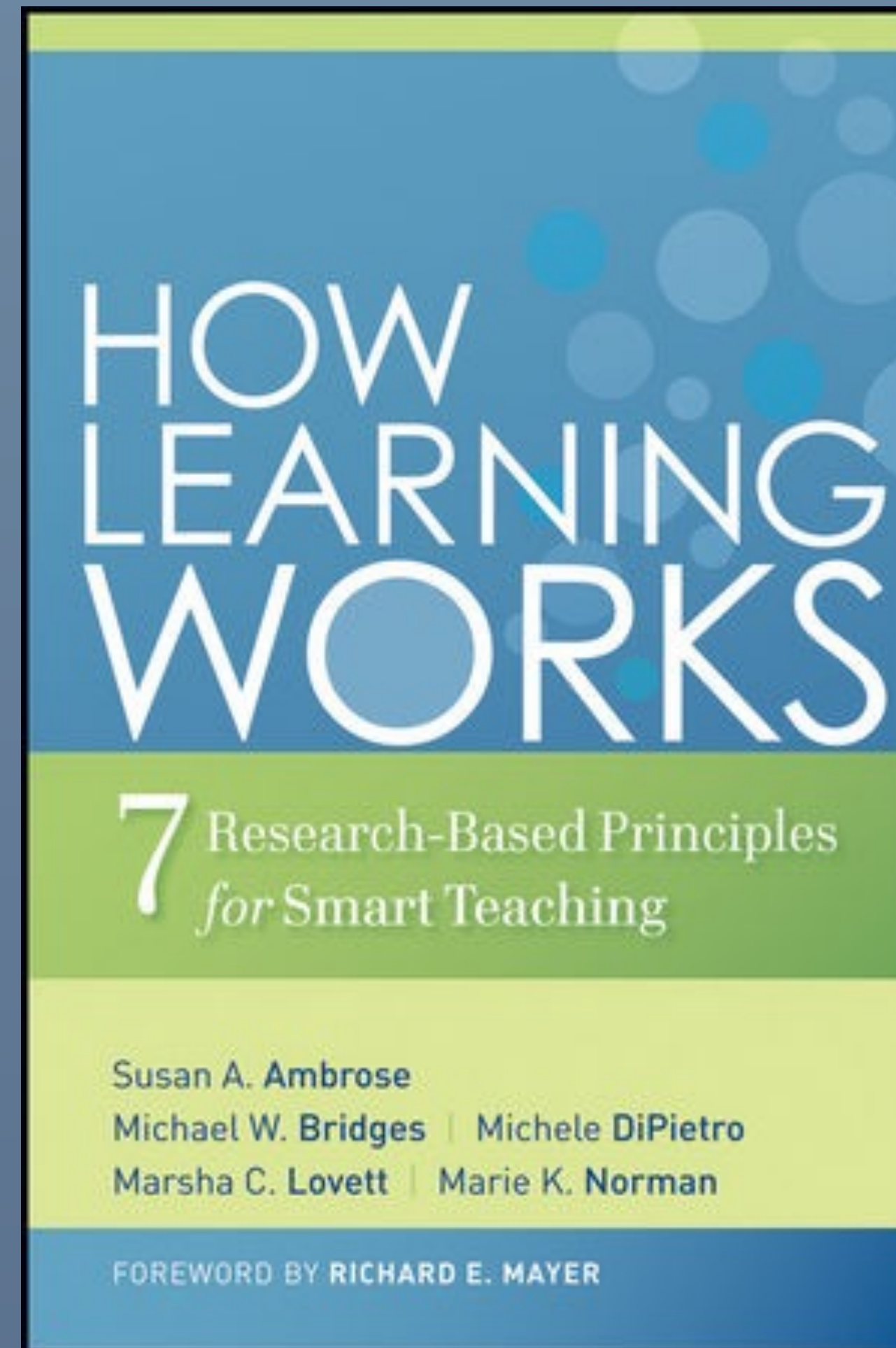
BRAIN-BASED LEARNING

- Talk about what we know about learning and studying
- Interleaving vs. massed practice
- Re-reading vs. retrieval practice
- Spacing out study sessions
- The importance of active learning
- Challenge all the misconceptions they/we have about effective learning



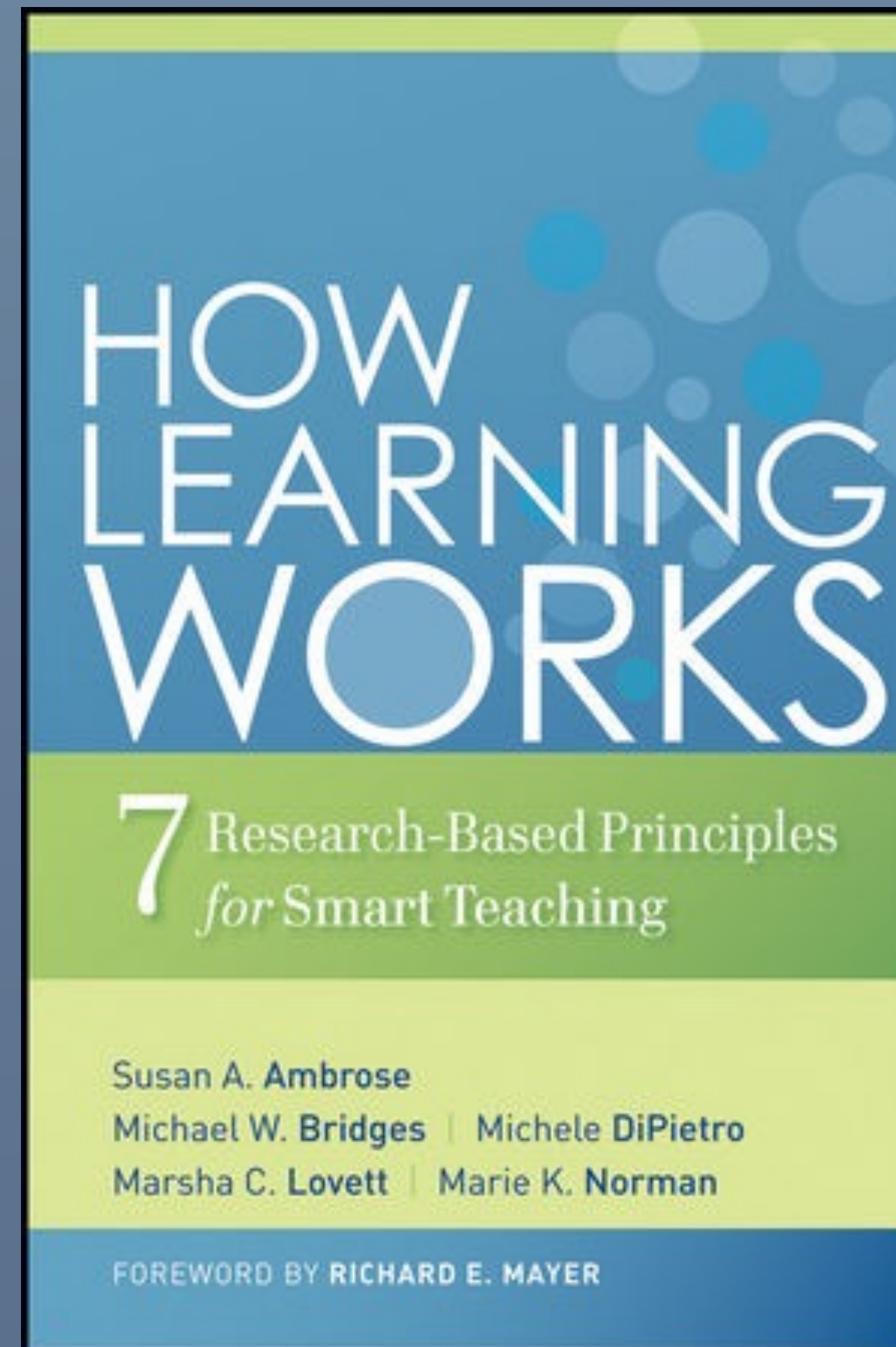
EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE

- Read the literature and share with your students
- Learning is “a process that leads to change, which occurs as a result of experience and increases the potential for improved performance and future learning” (Ambrose et al.)
- Create a learning experience grounded in active learning.
- Learning by doing works. Learning by listening is far, far less effective.



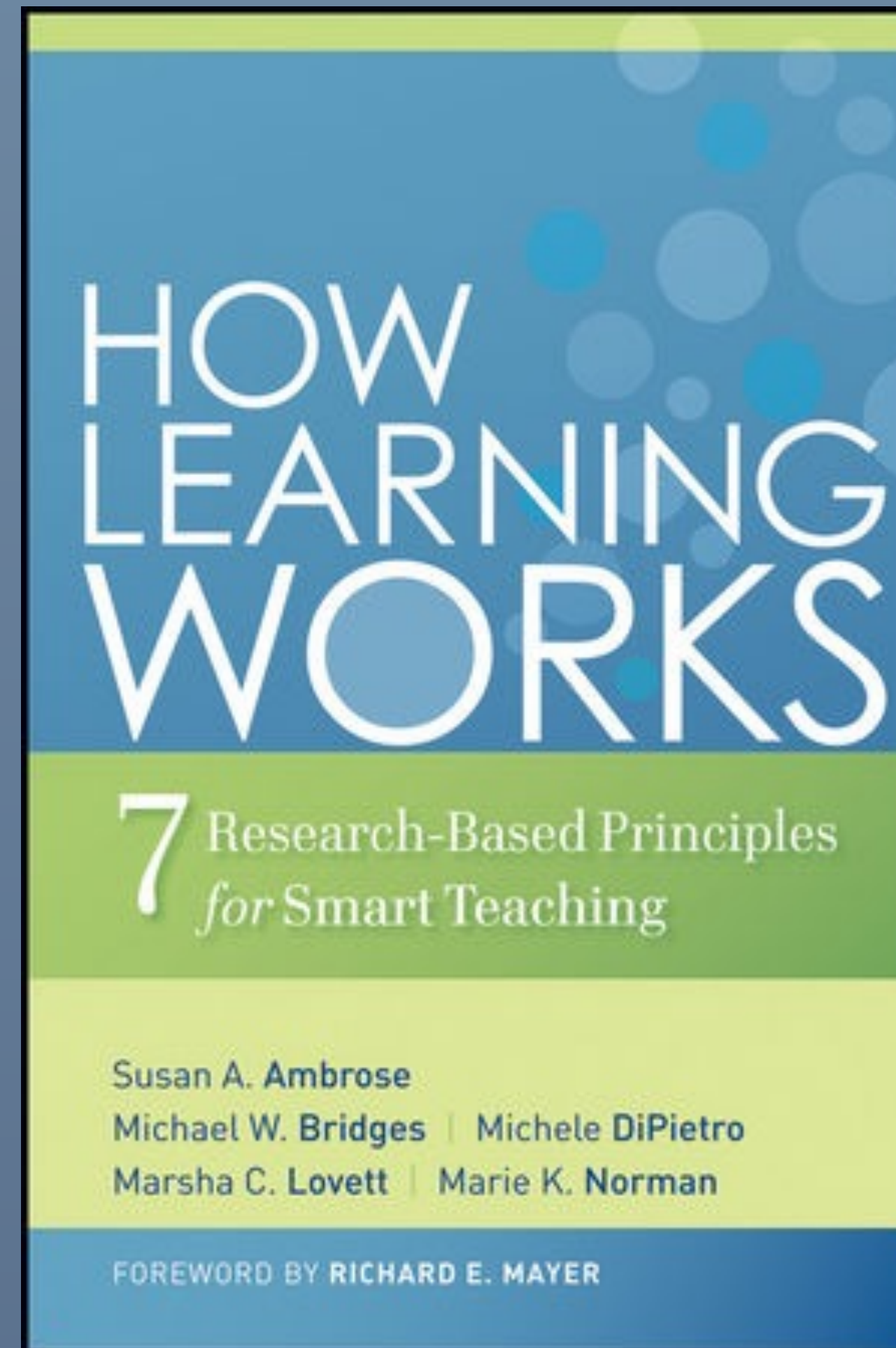
BUILD METACOGNITIVE SKILLS

- Classroom assessment techniques
- Get students thinking and reflecting on their learning
- Respond to what they've shared with you.
- Use a variety of formative assessment
- Low-stakes assignments better than large high-stakes ones



MAKE LEARNING AND TEACHING VISIBLE

- Share your teaching philosophy
- Talk about what you're doing and why you're doing it.
- Talk about what you're learning as the semester goes on
- Model a growth mindset.
- Don't be afraid to fail. Better yet, fail and share your failures with your students.
- Create a learning-focused culture in your class



CELEBRATE RESISTANCE AND GROWTH IN YOUR CLASSROOM

- Don't ignore resistance
- Celebrate when students tell you things are hard or that they don't understand. Remind them that this is where they can really learn the most.
- Support your students in their learning.
- Share your experiences with your students and colleagues
- Look for those ways in which you are resistant, too.



QUESTIONS?