



Teacher Tip of the Week

Target common student disabilities

In an ideal world, students would come to us as self-initiating, skilled learners. If they did, we could easily help them acquire an education. In fact, if students came to school as self-initiating, skilled learners, they would not need official classes at all. They would only need a good library and some advice on how best to study and learn. They would impose assignments on themselves and do the work required to master the subjects they were individually studying. When they acquired, or felt they had acquired, the required level of knowledge in a subject, they could be then tested and certified (ore re-directed) accordingly.

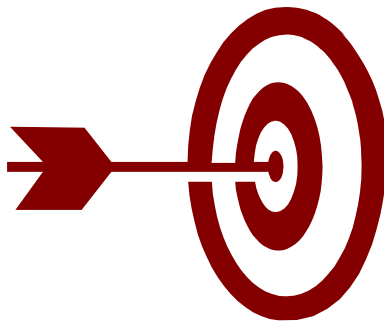
Unfortunately, most students arrive with a relatively low level of motivation to learn. What is more, they have few of the skills essential to the process of learning. Most have a predictable set of deficiencies that it does well to recognize from the outset so that one can take them into account in the design and conduct of instruction. In our experience, the following characterizations profile the weaknesses of the overwhelming majority of students. In general, students:

- Do only what they are required to do
- Tend to put off work on a project until they have a pressing deadline
- Are weak listeners
- Are weak writers
- Are weak oral communicators
- Do not use language with care and precision

- Have no intellectual standards
- Do not know how to access: their own work, their own thinking, their own emotions, their own life

Each of these characteristics, when present, requires instructional strategies that “correct” for them. For example, if students do only what they are required to do and put off work on projects until they have a pressing deadline, then we have little choice but to design instruction so that there are frequent requirements. Many shorter assignments force students to do more regular work and hence produce a higher quality of learning than a few long assignments. In line with this thinking, we usually assign a short paper for every class day. We treat this paper as a “ticket” to class (those who do not have it done are asked to go to the library and complete it). We use random sampling grading to avoid having to “grade” anything

but a small sampling of the papers assigned, while yet designing day-to-day work so that students get immediate feedback (by participating in self-assessment groups).—*Foundation for Critical Thinking Press*



THE FOUNDATION FOR CRITICAL THINKING

The Foundation for Critical Thinking seeks to promote essential change in education and society through the cultivation of fair-minded critical thinking, thinking predisposed toward intellectual empathy, humility, perseverance, integrity, and responsibility.



Ideas to Share

BULLETIN BOARDS

Whenever you create a unit or bulletin board, take pictures of it and store necessary parts in a file folder. When you are ready to do it again, pull out the folder and everything will be right there, especially exactly what it looked like.



Helpful Website for Teachers

<http://mathforum.org/~sarah/shapiro/>

Lessons, materials, and K-6 study guides to help kids learn about geometry and art.



The New Teacher Support Program

Teach Your Students About the 2008 Presidential Election Process



Help your students understand the presidential-election process by focusing on the 2008 race. There are hundreds of resources about voting, elections, and the current candidates to help you structure your classroom discussion, lesson plans, and homework assignments. Get your students involved in the political process, with our help!

Over the next few months until Election Day, we will be spotlighting various websites and resources that you can use with your students to educate them on

one of the most important rights of a citizen—to VOTE!

Electing a President: Lessons for Teaching About the Presidential Primaries

http://www.education-world.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson331.shtml

MEET THE PRINCIPALS: Anita Christian



“YOU MUST DO ONE THING YOU THINK YOU CANNOT DO.”

—ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

School: **Watertown Elementary**

How long have you been a principal at this school? **Since January 2005—before that I was an Assistant Principal beginning March of 2000. Previously, I was a teacher at Watertown High School teaching Language Arts and reading in 7-8 grades. I also taught English in grades 9-12. Colleges and universities attended: Cumberland University—Associate of Science degree; Belmont College—Bachelor of Arts degree; MTSU—Masters of Education in Administration and Supervision; Tennessee Tech—ED.S. degree in Instructional Leadership.**

Special interests and hobbies: **horseback riding, antiques, old cars, and a country music fan being George Strait’s #1 fan!**

Who or what inspires you each day as you do your job and why?

First, my parents for providing for me a good education and modeling for me a good work ethic of hard work, honesty, and dedication. They showed me each person can truly make a difference in other people’s lives. Secondly, my husband has shown me how never giving up can pay off, so never stop trying. My inspiration comes from the students of our school each day in providing for them a safe place to receive an education where they enjoy coming to school and look forward to each day.

If you had not gone into education, what type of job would you have chosen: **Public relations—I love meeting people or an author or songwriter—I love to write.** What is the favorite part of your job: **being around the children is my absolute most favorite part of the job. I love our students and love interacting with them on a daily basis.**



Advice and Support from the Veterans

CATHY YORK

ASST. PRINCIPAL/
RUTLAND ELEMENTARY



Looking back to my first year of teaching, I think of how much I've learned since then. Which, trust me, is a lot. But I believe the area in which I grew the most and realized was a major factor in being successful with

students was when I started effectively communicating to the parents. ("Effectively" being the key word). I was under the belief that if I sent a newsletter home once a week I was effectively communicating. Boy, was I wrong.

Once I incorporated calling or emailing at least one parent from my class everyday, I saw a positive change in my students and more support from the parents. I had always been a little scared to call parents, but I knew it was in the best interest of my

in the best interest of my students. To help "break the ice", I always made my first couple of calls or emails positive ones. Parents love to hear you bragging on their child. It helps to develop trust and shows them you care about their child as an individual.

Some of my calls were just to tell them I was concerned because their child looked tired or I was checking on them because they were out sick. My goal was just to develop a bond. Once they knew my main

concern was for their child they were very supportive. If I had to call about something their child had gotten in trouble for or for a bad grade, they weren't on the defensive like I had noticed from parents before. Students even started asking me, "Are you going to call my mom to tell her I made an "A" on my paper?" They loved it when I called home for good work, but also knew I would call for poor work or behavior as well.

So, the best advice I can give to first year teachers is to work hard at getting parents on your side. When you work together as a team, the student is the winner.

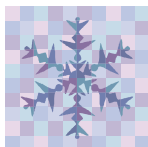
New Teacher Support Group Participants



LAUREN COLLIER
MT. JULIET HIGH SCHOOL
U.S. HISTORY

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

"I became a teacher because of my love of the content, the students, and the high school environment. History has always been an interest of mine and teaching provides me with an opportunity to continually learn and talk about my interest. I enjoy being around students and instilling in within them my enthusiasm for history and learning. I also have the great opportunity to learn from them and share in their learning and growing experiences both good and bad. Finally, my own great personal experience in high school has given me a great appreciation for the secondary school environment. High schools house many young people who are eager to learn about the world and themselves. The great people and encouraging atmosphere that helped me through these tough and exciting years inspired me to want to do the same for others."
Lauren Collier



REBECCA GRESHAM
WATERTOWN ELEMENTARY
DRAMA/ENGLISH/READING

WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

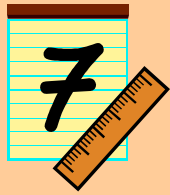
"I love working with kids and feeling like I can make a difference in the community. During my time in the corporate world, I struggled with feeling as though I should be doing something that gave back to the larger world. I constantly feel that I should be working in a classroom. Finally, I decided to go back to teaching. It was a great decision."—Rebecca Gresham

Did You Know?

DINOSAURS DID NOT EAT GRASS!



Plant-eating dinosaurs did not eat grass, because there wasn't any - so it is thought. During the Mesozoic Era, when the dinosaurs lived, conifers - cone-bearing trees and shrubs - dominated the landscape. They included redwoods, yews, pines, palms, cypress and the monkey puzzle tree. Flowering plants and grass evolved only later.



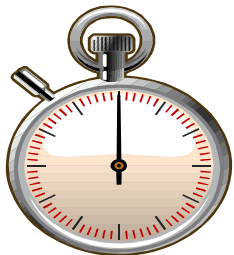
GOOD TEACHING: THE TOP TEN REQUIREMENTS

Good teaching is about caring, nurturing, and developing minds and talents. It's about devoting time, often invisible, to every student. It's also about the thankless hours of grading, designing or redesigning courses, and preparing materials to still further enhance instruction.

Time Management Tips for Teachers

ORGANIZING THE CLASSROOM

10. A coffee can or flower-pot makes a great place for students to put "ownerless" pencils they find in the classroom. This way, pencils will always be readily available and students won't have to take up your time asking for one to use.
11. Don't peel the back off of adhesive desk tags. They are hard to remove at the end of the year. Instead, use an



unpeeled tag and cover it with clear contact paper. The tag comes right off and leaves no residue.

12. Make your preparations for a new school year less stressful by involving students in decorating your classroom. This is a nice way to start building community among your new students and make the classroom feel like it is "our room".

Continued next week.....

Need a Laugh?



© Mark Parisi, Permission required for use

It is the policy of the Wilson County School System not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability in its educational programs or employment policies as required by Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.