



# Teacher Tip of the Week

## New Teacher Support Program 2008-2009

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November 2008

Vol. 4 Issue 12

Teacher Tip of the Week  
New Teacher Support  
Program  
Wilson County Schools  
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### 10 Mistakes for New Teachers to Avoid

Think of mistakes as opportunities to learn. Many of the mistakes you will make will be unavoidable. However, there are some mistakes, common to beginning teachers, that are avoidable. What follows is a list of the mistakes that new teachers tend to make most often.

cordingly. You can be caring and kind and still remain the professional.

**Mistake #5:** You become involved in school "politics." Avoid this at all costs. If your school's faculty lounge is a hotbed of controversy and gossip, stay far away from it.

**Mistake #1:** You want your students to like you and therefore you hesitate to discipline students accordingly. This is probably the most common mistake new teachers make. Believe it or not, students *want* boundaries. Let students know immediately what your rules or guidelines are and what the consequences are. Then, enforce them fairly and consistently.



**Mistake #6:** You overextend yourself by volunteering too often. Learn to say "no" in a polite way. Granted, there will be some duties that you simply cannot avoid, however, try to limit what you take on your first year. Concentrate your efforts on your classroom, your students, and yourself.

**Mistake #7:** Your students are not living up to your expectations therefore you think you are a failure. This is common for beginning teachers. It is important to have high expectations and lofty goals *that are realistic*. Are your expectations age appropriate? If you are unsure, ask other teachers. It is also important to remember that you are not teaching in a vacuum. Students come to you with varying abilities, different socio-economic backgrounds, and parents who may or may not be supportive. Ask yourself: Am I teaching to the best of my ability? Am I doing those things which will help my students improve? Do I have the required knowledge to teach this particular subject/lesson/activity? If your answers are yes, then continue as you have been. As time passes you will become more proficient at teaching. If, on the other hand, you do not have the required knowledge needed, then seek help. Ask veteran teachers, do research online, or visit your school district's media center.

**Mistake #2:** You avoid asking for help. Teaching can be an isolating experience. You enter your room, shut your door, and you are on your own. Or so many new teachers think. Remember: Your best resources for help and advice are in the classrooms next door or down the hall. If your school does not provide you with a mentor-teacher, seek one out yourself. Beginning teachers need and deserve emotional support and guidance.

**Mistake #3:** You are constantly bringing school work home so that you have no leisure time at all. The first year of teaching is usually the hardest. Indeed, some teachers say it was the hardest year of their lives. You feel unprepared, you have a mound of papers to grade, units to plan, parents to talk to . . . the list is endless. It is vital, however, to schedule time for yourself and your family. Take time to pamper yourself occasionally.

**Mistake #4:** You act in a less-than-professional manner in an attempt to relate to your students. Remember that you can be friendly with your students without being their "friend." Always keep in mind that you are the adult professional and act ac-

**Mistake #8:** You take home all the problems of the day. Leave the problems at school. They'll be right there waiting for you when you return. You need time to refresh and rejuvenate yourself.

Continued on page 2

#### HELPFUL WEBSITE FOR TEACHERS



<http://www.gameskidsplay.net/>

Looking for kids games? How about rules for playground games, verses for jump-rope rhymes, and much more??? You have come to right place! We have listed lots of new games recently and are in the process of giving the site a makeover!



#### Cutting Corners

#### REPORT CARD COMMENTS

I would like to advise all teachers to invest in a book by Kimberly Colen called "A Note From Your Teacher." This book is jam-packed full of any note a teacher of any age especially preschool through elementary can use. Kimberly Colen addresses nearly every possible scenario that teachers come in contact with.

## Dealing with Sadness and Loss in the Classroom

Everyone experiences sadness and grief when separated from loved ones. Healthy grieving is necessary to come to terms with loss.

Excessive and prolonged grieving can prevent a child from approaching others and forming new attachments. Responsive teachers and caregivers help children feel more comfortable with expressing sad, unhappy feelings. Here are some suggestions for helping children deal with sadness and loss.

Encourage children to talk about their feelings. The death of a classroom pet,



the unexpected move of a child, and the loss of a favorite plaything all provide opportunities to talk about their feelings. Use words such as sadness, grief, sorrow, and loss. Note the following exchange.

**Teacher:** "Yes, our little hamster, Snuffles, died last night. I know you really enjoyed playing with him, Sandy. How are you feeling right now?" **Child:** "I feel sad and have a lump in my throat."

Encourage children who are experiencing loss to remember the person or thing that they have lost. Accept the child's need to talk about good and bad memories of the missing person, pet, or plaything. A child might say, "Sometimes Spike used to bark and bite, but he also liked to play catch."

Understand that children may want to talk about other feelings and concerns related

to a loss. With the loss of a parent, a child may need to talk about his fear of what will happen to him, how his life will change, and what might happen to the other parent.

Talk about and express your own feelings of sadness. As you talk about your feelings, you might begin to cry. Your honest tears are a powerful message to children that they can talk about sadness and express grief in your classroom too. Your vulnerability also provides children with an opportunity to respond in a caring and loving way to give you support. If the loss is so great that you fear loss of control (the death of a child in your classroom, for example), take the time to share your feelings with an adult friend before talking with the children.

You might say, "I am feeling sad because my best friend is moving away," or "I'm feeling sad because it's the end of the year and this is the last day we will be together as a

class. Provide an accepting atmosphere. Children experiencing loss need to feel free to openly express their feelings of sadness and grief. Be careful to avoid minimizing their feelings by saying things like "It's not so bad" or "Cheer up!" Avoid probing questions that may distract and confuse. Say, for example, "Erin, you feel hurt and sad inside that your dad has moved out. It's okay to cry."

Accept as normal some changes in behavior. For both children and adults, it is hard to leave our emotions outside the classroom. Each child will react differently to loss. A loss at home may cause some children to have difficulty concentrating. Others may lash out at their friends and teachers. Still others may become very quiet and withdrawn.

Imagine, for example, that one of your children has parents who recently divorced. Before the divorce, he was an independent, active child. But now he seems to cling to you as much as possible, seeking your attention and wanting your approval of everything he does.

Anger can also mask sadness and grief. Children's sadness may emerge only after the anger is accepted and safely expressed. Say, "Sharon, sometimes people act angry when they are really sad and hurt. If you feel angry, you are welcome to pound this playdough. When you're through, we can talk about it."

Recognize when children's grieving requires professional assistance. Recommend that parents seek professional help if their child's grieving becomes a problem for the child.—*Charles Smith, Human Development Specialist*



**"The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives."**

—Robert M. Hutchins

### 10 Mistakes to Avoid (cont. from page 1)

**Mistake #9:** You ignore small behavior problems in hopes they will go away. Small problems have a way of turning into big problems. Take care of the small problems immediately with an appropriate response. For example, if a student is quietly whispering while you are teaching, get the student's attention and then shake your head in a stern manner. If the student continues to misbehave, take stronger measures. Some students try to "test" the teacher to see how much they can get away with. If you fairly and consistently discipline students, this should not be a problem.

**Mistake #10:** You do not have a clear set of rules or guidelines. This should be one of your first priorities. Create (or allow your students to create) a set of classroom rules. Post these in the room. At the beginning of the year go over each rule or guideline with your students. Give students examples and non-examples of following the rules. Make sure students know what the consequences are for not following the rules. Be consistent and fair when enforcing the rules.

## New Teacher Support Participants:



**Kathleen Proctor**

Watertown Elementary

5th grade

### WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

*"I have always had a passion for children and for learning. I loved school as a child, and want to share that experience and joy with students today. I want to shape children into good citizens who are educated and passionate about life and learning."*—Kathleen Proctor



**Periann Cantrell**

Elize D. Patton Elementary

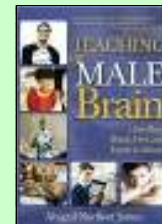
K-5 Special Education

### WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

*"To help children see the benefit of an education and to enjoy learning."*—Periann Cantrell

*\*Apologies to Periann for promoting her with an incorrect statement last week.*

## From the Bookshelf:



**Teaching the Male Brain : How Boys Think, Feel, and Learn in School**  
by Abigail Norfleet James

This practical guide to teaching boys combines classic and cutting-edge research to show you why males learn differently and, more important, how you can differentiate teaching strategies to help them succeed in the classroom. The author's qualitative and quantitative research presents the cognitive, sensory, physical, social, and emotional differences between genders.

James draws from years of classroom experience to offer strategies that have been tested, refined, and used successfully in the field. This easy-to-use handbook provides helpful examples, case studies, and troubleshooting sections illustrating how to handle the concerns that can arise when teaching boys.



Jack and Annie travel in their magic treehouse to the year 1621, where they celebrate the first Thanksgiving with the Pilgrims and Wampanoag Indians in the New Plymouth Colony.

6-9 years of age

## Using humor in the classroom



Here are some ways you can use humor to bring about a better climate in your classroom. The list is from the Institute for Educational Research.

- Read humorous materials aloud to your class. Humor can be found in books, jokes, poetry and word puzzles. Search out books that specialize in classroom humor or categorize jokes according to

subject matter.

- Post humorous cartoons, photos and quotations on your classroom bulletin board.
- Laugh at yourself. Share your mistakes with your students. Use laughter to get through embarrassing moments in class.
- Don't tell jokes that make fun of students. Don't joke about or treat lightly serious issues such as drugs, drinking or suicide.
- Include a few humorous items on each test you write to help relieve students' test anxiety.

- Use homonyms, puns, riddles, homophones, ambiguities and figures of speech in humorous ways.

A teacher was sitting at her desk grading papers, when her first-grade class came back from lunch. Alice informed the teacher, "Paul has to go to the principal's office." "Do you know why," the teacher asked. "Because he's a following person," Alice replied. "A what?" "It came over the loud-speaker: 'The following persons are to go to the office...'"



# Master Teacher Tips... Student Relationships

Whenever you are in the uncomfortable or uncertain position of not knowing what you can talk to a student about, keep in mind that most people have four hot buttons. Once you press these buttons, you will be able to keep any communication going. First are friendly inquiries about family. Second are questions about personal ambitions and activities, including hobbies, recreation, and interests. Third are questions about things students take pride in—their accomplishments, awards, and achievements. Fourth are questions about students' goals and what they are doing to achieve them. You will find any of these topics engage students and encourage them to share what is going on in their lives.

Be aware that there are three types of phrases that can cause tension with students if delivered in a careless or abrupt way:

- 1—Ordering phrases: "You have to ..." or "You will ..."
- 2—Threatening phrases: "If you don't ..." or "You had better never ..."
- 3—Preaching phrases: "You ought to ..." or "It is only right that you should ..."



## Upcoming Events

**American Education Week**  
November 16-22

**National Geography Awareness Week**  
November 16-22

**World Kindness Day**  
November 13

**I Love to Write Day**  
November 15

## For a Laugh!

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"That grade is so unfair!  
She skipped right over 'E!'"