



# Teacher Tip of the Week

## New Teacher Support Program 2008-2009

Terry Edwards, Program Coordinator

April 2009

Vol. 4 Issue 30

Teacher Tip of the Week  
New Teacher Support  
Program  
Wilson County Schools  
615-453-7282

### Where in the world is Afghanistan? Building Geography Competency in the Classroom

#### HELPFUL WEBSITE FOR TEACHERS



<http://www.storyplace.org/>

Created by the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, this site for students in pre-school through grade 2 features animated stories, interactive activities, off-line activities and suggestions for parents to extend the concepts in the online materials.



#### Cutting Corners

##### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

"I have a student answer a question then I say to the class clap once if you agree. Then clap twice if you disagree. Then the majority of clapping will let you know if they understand or not."

#### Where in the World Is Afghanistan?

United States education officials were shocked when a survey of nine industrialized nations revealed that fewer than one in five U.S. adults (ages 18-24) could pinpoint Afghanistan on the world map, in spite of its recent prominence in the national news.

Meanwhile, surveys of teachers found that although they felt competent to teach social studies, the majority felt that they were under so much pressure to focus on reading and mathematics that social studies as a whole got neglected.



#### Geography by Nature

Certainly, if teachers try to teach each strand of social studies in a stand-alone fashion, there would simply not be enough time. By nature, geography is an interdisciplinary discipline, and it provides a natural lens through which other skills can be taught. This spells opportunities for teachers to integrate geography into their weekly instruction.

#### Five Themes of Geography

Before exploring this idea, consider the five themes of geography that The Joint Committee on Geographic Education of the National Council for Geographic Education and the American Association of Geographers developed to help focus teacher and student thinking when it comes to geography:

Location(coordinates of longitude and latitude, distance from another place or general, i.e Northeast)

Place (differences defined in terms of cli-

mate, physical features or the people who live there and their traditions)

Human-environment interaction(how people change the environment to meet their needs and its positive and negative impact)

Movement(patterns of movement of people, commerce, ideas) Regions (defined by characteristics including area, language, political divisions, religions and vegetation)

#### Community-Building Activities

At the beginning of the school year, many teachers spend a considerable amount

of time establishing classroom norms, developing relationships, and creating the safe and respectful environment in which students can thrive and learn. *Storying* or sharing personal information about one another is central to the process of building community.

#### Storying

With *storying*, it is relatively easy to extend conversations to cover each of the geographic strands mentioned above. The level of student motivation will tend to be high because the topic is personal to them. Students can begin a *storying* process by interviewing grandparents, parents, or guardians.

#### Parent/Grandparent Interviews

For a homework project, students take home a list of questions to ask their parents, grandparents, or guardians. Obviously the level of sophistication will depend on the grade level. Interview questions can include the following:

*Continued on page 2*

## Building Geography Competency (continued from page 1)

- Where were you born?
- Where are you ancestors from?
- What language did they speak?
- What did they do in school?
- What type of foods did they eat?
- How did they travel in their community?
- What types of occupations were typical?
- Why did they move?

### Building on Interviews

Many activities could result from inter-



**“When I learn something new--and it happens every day--I feel a little more at home in this universe, a little more comfortable in the nest.”**

**—Bill Moyers**

view data. Consider how each of the student activities listed below builds geography competency as described in the Five Themes.

- Make a large map of the United States and the World, and locate the place their ancestors came from.
- Compare these places to their own neighborhood in terms of weather, climate, vegetation, landforms, etc.
- Collect data on how many parents/grandparents were born in state/out of state or outside of the USA; show this data graphically in many different ways; make grade appropriate analysis of the data.

•Invite parents, grandparents, or guardians to the classroom to talk about the specific traditions that have been handed down to them from their ancestors; compare and contrast these traditions with their own.

•Research their families homeland. The teacher might decide on a number of the parameters leaving the students room to research areas of interest to them. (Ralph Fletcher's *Craft Lessons* has an excellent series of mini lessons on informational reports. Using and extending his mini lessons makes it possible for even kindergarten students to do research

but the key is providing appropriate books.)

- Learn about important inventions, people, or ideas that came from places of their parents/grandparents/ancestors birth. Students might explore the impact of these ideas on their community today.
- Compare how, and in what ways, their neighborhood has changed since the time their parent/grandparent lived and analyze the negative and positive changes.
- Compare time zones and think about the impact that different time zones might have on people's lives.
- Look at major imports/exports from their ancestor's country and analyze why they might have changed.

### Breaking Bread

'Breaking bread' is an excellent theme to use when building community and exploring geography. 'Breaking bread' together is a universal experience. It is an action performed by family and friends.

A teacher could look at the ethnic make up of the classroom and decide which countries to study. Parents or guest speakers could be invited in to the classroom to share the bread of their country of origin as well as information about their traditions, etc. Students could then

## THANK A TEACHER



**Rep. Barney Frank**  
**Massachusetts**

“My favorite teacher was Harvard Professor John Dunlop, who had served as the Secretary of Labor under President Richard Nixon and was teaching Labor Economics when I, then a college junior, enrolled in the course.”

“He made a great impression on me because he stressed the importance in public policy of trade-offs,” says Frank, who entered politics two years after taking Dunlop's class. “He stressed the importance of recognizing when desirable goals might conflict with each other. I really found my approach to issues influenced by what he said.”—Barney

study the cultures behind the bread and undertake many of the activities listed above.—  
*Teaching Today*



## New Teacher Support Participant:



**Trish Churchwell**

Watertown Elementary

1st grade

### WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

- *I love working with children.*
- *I have a passion for teaching children and for watching them smile when they learn and when they connect with the learning.*
- *I enjoy making 18-20 new little friends and building a relationship that helps students succeed in life!—Trish Churchwell*



## Teaching Behaviors

Although effective teacher behaviors vary with context, several studies have identified teaching behaviors which are common across grade levels.

Effective teachers score high on these behaviors:

- Accepting
- Adult involvement
- Attending
- Consistency of message
- Conviviality
- Cooperation
- Student engagement
- Knowledge of subject
- Monitoring learning
- Optimism
- Pacing
- Promoting self sufficiency
- Spontaneity
- Structuring

## From the Bookshelf:



### The High Trust Classroom: Raising Achievement from the Inside Out by Lonnie Moore

This book provides a roadmap to developing a high-trust classroom, a classroom—

- With increased student achievement
- With few discipline problems
- Where students are intrinsically motivated
- Where the teacher can confidently use creative lesson planning

The author presents a simple step by step approach to earning the trust of students, parents and colleagues. A high-trust classroom will impact your ability to unleash the full potential of your students and to convince them of their own potential. It will also help your classroom operate more efficiently and improve student achievement.



### Amazing Animals of the Rainforest by Tracey West

Agas 7-10



## “Incoming” Dilemma

A teacher’s desk can become piled high with junk by the end of the day unless there’s an easy-to-maintain system in place for dealing with incoming items and papers. Have a set place near, not on, your desk for students to turn things in, so they don’t become accustomed to piling things up on your personal workspace.



Have a basket for any special assignments you collect (such as writing waiting to be edited) as well as a separate inbox for parent notes, children’s drawings, and other non-assignments. Keep your most frequently used binders, teacher’s manuals, and office supplies right out on your desk and keep the others on nearby shelves and drawers. Have a file organizer on your desk to hold incoming papers (to read, to sort, to do, to keep on hand, and to file). Lastly, have a large, deep basket in which to place any papers or items you don’t have time to deal with immediately during the day, and be vigilant about emptying it each afternoon before you leave work. Make it your goal to have nothing but your plan book on your desk as you leave.



# Master Teacher Tips...

## Motivation

When asking students to learn something new, explain that they are not inadequate or lacking. They are simply adding a new skill to their repertoire. Remind them that doctors, lawyers, accountants, architects, public officials, carpenters, plumbers, and other adults have to learn new skills all the time, even though it may seem they know everything they need to know. It also helps to have students take an inventory of the skills they already have that lead into the new skills all the time, even though it may seem they know everything they need to know. It also helps to have students take an inventory of the skills they already have that lead into the new skills being introduced. This action may help students who are reluctant to try new things or who fear failure. It builds self-esteem and confidence and enhances the motivation to tackle new learning tasks.

While they may seem small, there are five teaching strategies which are very useful in motivating students to give effort and learn. First, avoid using terms such as “No,” “Stop,” and “Don’t.” second, look at and talk directly to students, and always use their names as you do. Third, listen to students with care and respect, or you will automatically decrease motivation. Fourth, develop class spirit because it helps everyone, bright and slow alike, do better in class. Fifth, let students know they are missed when they are absent.



## Upcoming Events

May—Clean Air Month

May—Older Americans Month

Pen Pals International Week

May 1-7

Be Kind to Animals Week

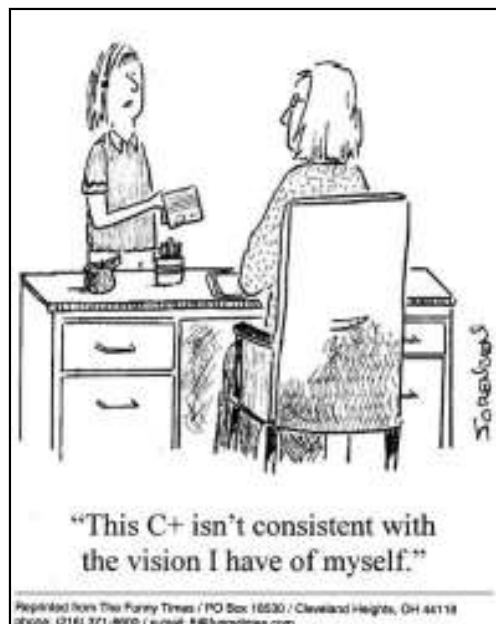
May 3-9

May Day May 1

Roberts Rule of Order Day

May 2

## For a Laugh!



The Wilson County School System does not discriminate due to age, race, color, gender, national origin, disability, religion, creed, or veteran status in the provision of services, in programs or activities, or in employment opportunities or benefits. Inquiries should be made to the following individuals at (615) 444-3282: Title VI or Title IX of the Civil Rights Act—Monty Wilson; Section 504—Yvonne Smith; Americans with Disabilities Act—David Burton.