



# Teacher Tip of the Week

## New Teacher Support Program 2009-2010

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Teacher Tip of the Week  
New Teacher Support  
Program  
Wilson County Schools  
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### Teaching Opportunities for Veterans Day

#### HOW TO DO IT— CHECKLIST



#### Help Students Pace Homework Assignments

For long assignments, set benchmark dates for smaller sections of the assignment to be due. First, break down long assignments into smaller parts, identifying a benchmark date for each small part to be due. One each given benchmark date, have students bring the specified work to class to share with their classmates. As the students share what they have done so far, you can confer with individuals and check off who has completed that portion of the assignment.

Whether it's peacetime or wartime, it's always important to teach our students that Veterans Day means more than just a day off from school. Patriotism is a value that must be taught and modeled for our young students. By taking some time to give this sentiment even deeper meaning in your classroom around national holidays, you will be building the foundation for your young students to be proud and contributing citizens of our country.

World War I officially ended on June 28, 1919, with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. The actual fighting between the Allies and Germany, however, had ended seven months earlier with the armistice, which went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918. Armistice Day, as November 11 became known, officially became a holiday in the United States in 1926, and a national holiday 12 years later. On June 1, 1954, the name was changed to Veterans Day to honor all U.S. veterans.



In 1968, new legislation changed the national commemoration of Veterans Day to the fourth Monday in October. It soon became apparent, however, that November 11 was a date of historic significance to many Americans. Therefore, in 1978 Congress returned the observance to its traditional date.

Here are a few ideas for introducing Veterans Day in the classroom:

- Ask the students what they think Veteran's Day is for. Why is it important? What does the word 'veteran' mean?
- Inquire if any students have any relatives or acquaintances that are veterans. Have they heard any first-person stories about wartime?
- If you live in a military town, give the students a chance to talk about any

family members who are serving our country currently. Emphasize that they are heroes who will be honored during future Veterans Day celebrations after finishing their service.

- Have the students imagine that they are away at war. Perhaps they could each write a fictional letter back home, telling friends and family what it is like on the battlefield. Or they could write a page of an imaginary diary about their war experiences.

- Focus on the lives of heroes from America's wars. George Washington and other famous veterans can serve as powerful inspiration to young children.

- Invite a local veteran to speak to your class. Check if any of your students are related to veterans or contact your local veterans' group for names and numbers.

#### Some Facts About Veterans

- There are currently about 25 million living Veterans.
- Over 48 million Americans have served in the military during war and peace since 1776.
- Every year, about 80,000 veterans are buried in one of the cemeteries of the National Cemetery system.
- 260,000 veterans will be homeless this year.
- 65,000 Veterans have recorded their individual war stories at the Library of Congress' American Folklife Center
- As many as 35 percent of Iraq Veterans have or will experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- 184,251 troops are currently on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to the Pentagon.

## Managing Student Talking

It used to be that when students were learning in the classroom, silence reigned. Children were expected to sit still, sit silently, and do their work independently. With the onset of collaborative learning groups and hands-on learning activities, the lines of when students can and cannot talk have become blurred. So, how do you manage the talking going on your classroom without stifling creativity and learning?

The first thing to determine is when talking is appropriate in your classroom. Is it okay for students to talk while you're giving instruction or directions? What about when students are working on assignments? Do you mind if students talk while doing independent work, or is it only acceptable during pair and group activities? It's important to sit down and think through your preferences. I, personally, like a chatty class -- to a point. I do not appreciate talking while I'm teaching or giving directions. If students talk quietly while they are working, however, I don't mind -- as long as the work is accomplished. What are your expectations about talking in the classroom? Be specific when determining what is and is not acceptable to you. That will make it easier to communicate those expectations to your students.

Secondly, set the ground rules about talking. Let students know up front when it is okay to talk and when it is not okay to talk. Be sure to give them specific guidelines about talking times. For example: "Students may talk quietly when working on class assignments. The noise level should not get above "x" level." One teacher I know told her students that if she said her name in a normal tone of voice and no one heard, they were talking too loud. What do you mean by quietly? Give examples for students of what is and is not acceptable.

In my classroom and in workshop presentations, I use a concept I like to call, "My Time/Your Time." During "My Time" (teacher-centered time), students should be focused on me, listening, and taking notes as needed. "My Time" includes lesson instruction, giving directions, and times when I'm addressing the class as a whole group.

"Your Time" refers to student centered time. Dur-



ing group work, class activities, and class assignments, students are allowed to talk quietly as long as they get their work completed. If the work is not getting done, then the privilege is gone for the day and they can try again tomorrow. I usually stress to my students that I try to teach in short increments (usually 10 minutes or so) and then move to a class activity. That makes them more willing to stay quiet and focused during "My Time" -- when they know that in just a little while they'll have the chance to talk.

Third, use a consistent signal or set of signals to bring student focus back to you. When we allow talking in our class, very often it will get out of control. That is only natural. As human beings, we are very social creatures. We enjoy talking and sharing with others. As everyone begins to talk, the noise level increases until everyone is yelling. Just think about the last restaurant you went to. As more and more people sit to eat

(and talk) the noise level increases. Using a signal keeps you from raising your voice and adding to the racket.

I have two signals that work best for me. The first is the quiet signal. Raising my hand in the air is a sign to students that they need to stop what they are doing (including talking) and focus on me. I also keep a small dinner bell in my pocket. When it gets too loud in the classroom, I ring my bell as a way of saying, "quiet down." That helps students know it's time to get quiet, but they don't have to stop talking altogether. If everyone continues to talk loudly, I use the quiet signal and take a few moments to remind them of my expectations. Whatever signal(s) you decide to use, explain them fully to the class and practice a few times to help everyone understand how to respond appropriately. Also, be sure to use your signal(s) consistently.

Finally, monitor, monitor, monitor. There are two things that ensure our students will let themselves get out of control -- they are human beings and they are young. Do not expect that students only will talk about the lesson, class assignment, project, or other school related topics while you sit back at your desk doing paperwork or grading. It won't happen. As soon as they feel you are out of earshot, numerous topics will appear into the conversations around the classroom. Instead, while students are working and talking, walk around and listen to what is being said. That will help you notice which groups are more focused on the discussion of last weekend, movies, and school gossip than on their work.

Drop in on the conversation and give a gentle nudge toward the assign-



**"We are not retreating — we are advancing in another direction."**

— General Douglas MacArthur

ment. Ask questions such as, "How's it coming?," "What have you done so far?," or "What is one thing you have learned in this activity?" Don't ask, "Do you have any questions," because invariably you'll get a quick reassurance from the students. Then, as soon as you leave, they're back to their previous conversation. Instead, ask questions that make the group/pair focus on the work at hand. Lean in to let them know you are paying attention. It is amazing how quickly the conversation changes once they notice you're listening.

While a little bit of "extra-curricular" talk is okay, we want our students concentrating on their work. Also, when you notice the work is not getting completed, it's time to put a halt to the talking. Let everyone know they've lost their privilege for the rest of the day, but they'll get another chance tomorrow.—*Emma McDonald*

'09-'10

## NEW TEACHER SUPPORT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



Brad Swope

Mt. Juliet High School

Health Occupations

**WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?** “Being 25+ years into a career as an athletic trainer, I have worked with athletes in many settings. High schools, junior colleges, universities and professional teams have dotted my career map. Caring for athletes involves teaching on a daily basis. Whether I was instructing the athlete, the coach, the parent, the physician or an administrator, I was teaching an aspect to some degree. Teach has never been a scary place for me, but all the new “legalistic” protocols are mind boggling. Along came December 8 and my sports medicine job was eliminated and the opportunity arose to teach health occupations at MJHS. So why not!—Brad Swope



## OFF THE BOOKSHELF



**The Daily Five : Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades**  
by Gail Boushey, Joan Moser

Do you love teaching but feel exhausted from the energy you expend cajoling, disciplining, and directing students on a daily basis? If so, you'll want to meet “The Sisters”, Gail Boushey and Joan Moser. Based on literacy learning and motivation research, they created a structure called The Daily Five which has been practiced and refined in their own classrooms for ten years, and shared with thousands of teachers throughout the United States. The Daily Five is a series of literacy tasks (reading to self, reading with someone, writing, word work, and listening to reading) which students complete daily while the teacher meets with small groups or confers with individuals.

This book not only explains the philosophy behind the structure, but shows you how to carefully and systematically train your students to participate in each of the five components.

Explicit modeling practice, reflecting and refining take place during the launching phase, preparing the foundation for a year of meaningful content instruction tailored to meet the needs of each child.

## TEACHER WEBSITE of THE WEEK:

<http://www.assortedstuff.com/top101/?p=237>

### Some Great Odds and Ends



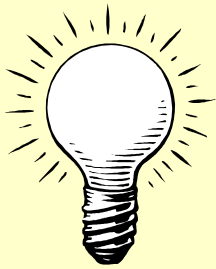
A quick look at a few interesting and/or new online exhibits from around the web.

America by Air looks at the history of commercial air travel in the US. It includes lots of pictures and a collection of interactive activities. Look Behind the Scenes to see how the physical exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum was created.

Blue Wales is a site to accompany the program Kingdom of the Blue Wales which premieres Sunday, March 8th on the National Geographic Channel (and which will probably be repeated many times after that). A small collection of excellent photographs and one or two video clips from the program.

Islam in Southeast Asia is based on a book by the Asia Society. You can purchase the book for \$25 or use this site which contains all the materials. The resources cover the history and culture and mixes wonderful photographs with video, animation and interactive maps.

Finally, this one isn't designed for students but includes materials that would be great for high school economics or government. Frontline, the excellent PBS documentary series, recently produced a program on the economic problems so much in the news called Inside the Meltdown. The site includes the full program in segments along with lots of great supplementary materials.



# Strategies for New Teachers . . .

## PARENT COMMUNICATION

Communication with parents is one of the most powerful tools you have, especially when dealing with student issues such as disrespect, apathy, and poor work ethic. The strategies below help ensure positive results with parents interactions, whether by phone, email, or in person.

- Always begin with a positive comment about the student.
- State your concerns as just that—concerns: “I am really concerned that Johnny is not working to his potential.” Follow this with a specific example.
- Phrase your concerns in terms of the student’s behavior, not personal attributes. Report rather than state opinions. Have your grade book and other documents (student work, tests, records of behavior) ready to provide data. It’s quite different (and better) to say, “Jane’s test average is 64.3%” rather than “Jane does terrible on her tests.”

(continued next week...)



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

NATIONAL  
INSPIRATIONAL ROLE  
MODELS MONTH

NATIONAL PEANUT  
BUTTER LOVERS’ MONTH

WORK KINDNESS WEEK  
November 9-15

AMERICAN EDUCATION  
WEEK  
November 15-21

VETERANS DAY  
November 11

I LOVE TO WRITE DAY  
November 15



## Back to school

Teacher: Class, we will have only half a day of school this morning.

Class: Hooray

Teacher: We will have the other half this afternoon!



### INSERVICE REMINDER:

November 17—Lesson Planning and Pacing for Elementary Teachers (required for Pre-K-5 grade teachers)

December 3—Parent/Teacher Partnerships/Survival Tips (required for all)

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.