



# 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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### Homework Overload—How Much is Enough?

#### HOW TO DO IT— CHECKLIST



#### Draw Up a Respect Agreement

Have students agree to treat other respectfully in your class. On the first day of school, tell students that you want to make sure that everyone feels respected in your classroom. Guide your classes in preparing a list of six to eight general ideas for how the class can have a respectful and safe learning environment. Make sure each item is stated positively. Create a poster with the compiled list. Post the agreement in the classroom.

There is such a thing as homework overload. How much time should students spend doing homework? There have been a number of studies about the effectiveness of homework. Many believe that homework helps to deepen student learning and develop thinking skills. It also teaches responsibility, managing time, and study habits. Others believe that homework takes away time from childhood play, overburdens students, and takes away from family time. Some parents feel it is given to students to bury them in work.

The research on the effectiveness of giving homework and its impact on student achievement is in disagreement and sometimes contradictory. Some of the highest performing students in the world like Finland and Japan assign less homework than we do in America.

Make homework interesting, purposeful, and doable. On one of your slow days, try doing homework that you have assigned students in class. See how long it takes you to do it. Add anywhere from 15 minutes to half an hour for your students to do it. Did it take too long to do? Was it relevant to what the students had learned or would learn that day? Was it interesting? Or was it simply, "read pages 1-14 and answer questions 1,3,5,6,7 and 9 on page 17?"

You need to know why you assigning homework. Is it achieving the objectives that you had in mind? Research shows that the most effective homework either prepares students for future lessons or reinforces and clarifies lessons that they have been taught. Some students will tell you that they understand all of the work at the end of the lesson but when they go home they find that they did not understand key concepts.



Do not collect homework unless you plan to do something with it. For teachers in middle and high school this is difficult to do with 130-150 students. It is possible to check one or two of the most important homework questions and assess whether or not the students get the key points of the lesson or it is time to reteach.

What does the research say about the amount of homework to be done? On average, American students have one hour of homework a night. But averages cover up a great deal of variation. Research indicates that older students benefit from more homework than younger students.

But too much homework diminishes its effectiveness. For students in high school, 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 hours seems the optimum. For middle school students, less than 1 to 1 1/2 hours per night (not per subject.) research findings also conclude that it is not the amount of homework given but the amount of homework completed that raises student achievement.

Maintain open lines of communication with parents about how long it takes their child to do homework. If the child takes too long to do homework, it may indicate that the child is having other problems in school that the teacher may be unaware of. You might want to develop a form asking parents if their child

- Completed the homework easily and independently;
- Had difficulty understanding what was asked in the homework;
- Had difficulty completing the homework; or
- Had difficulty focusing on the assignment.

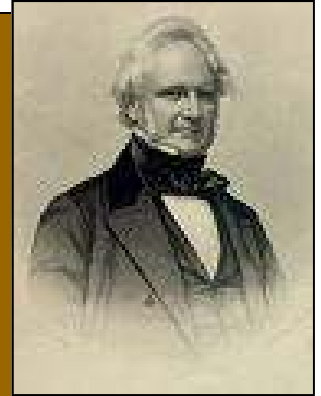
Teachers in a school should insure the pattern of homework given.—Franklin Schargel

## Teaching Tips from the Veterans

*Often times veteran teachers in a school serve as mentors to the new teachers on board. Their advice can be invaluable in terms of helping with classroom management, time management and discipline issues. Throughout the remainder of the school year we will focus on many of these "pearls of wisdom."*

- Put a tray by the door with the worksheet or handouts that students will need that class period. They pick it up as they come in.
- Make a point of making fun of yourself every so often and never make fun of a student unless they make fun of themselves in front of you. Humor is crucial. Your students are more sensitive than you are, model that and respect it.
- When preparing for an exam, I have all students make up their own 10-question tests over the material for homework. They then spend a day quizzing each other using their self-made tests and turn them in. The "official test" then is one I make up using a variety of the students' own questions.
- In my elementary music classes, I use teddy bears to encourage students to volunteer to read during sight-reading from the board. I toss a stuffed bear to the students who volunteer. Lots of students now volunteer to read as they love catching the teddy bears.
- Kids have laminated name cards on their desk. They put them on the teacher's desk when they need 1-1 attention. The teacher can call them up in the order they appear on the desk. These same name cards can be hung on a hook at the board when the child "checks out" to the bathroom. No asking is needed. No name, workshop participant.
- Upon returning from lunch, give the students 2 minutes to talk to each other before going into routine. This helps to get out that "goofy" energy before settling down and focusing on the lesson. Use this time to take roll, set out bell work, etc.
- Do (physical) exercises while learning and practicing new spelling words.

(to be continued)



**“Education:  
a debt due  
from  
present to  
future  
generations.”**

—George Peabody

## What you can do about bullying

Treat bullying seriously. Remember Smokey the Bear's advice, "It is easier to prevent, then to put out." You need to create a classroom climate that builds trust and respect for all, and establishes that bullying is unacceptable. When you have to react, react quickly and decisively.

Do not look the other way when incidents involving bullying occur. Bullying may be a physical act but

also may be a verbal act. Treat them both as equally serious. Take immediate action when bullying is observed. All teachers and staff must let children know they care and will not allow anyone to be mistreated. By taking immediate action and dealing directly with the bully, adults support both the



victim and the witnesses.

Confront bullies in private. Challenging bullies in front of their peers may actually enhance their status and lead to further aggression. Refer both victims and aggressors to counseling when appropriate. Provide protection for bullying victims when

necessary. Such protection may include creating a buddy system whereby students have a particular friend or older buddy on whom they can depend and with whom they share class schedule information and plans for the school day.—Franklin Scharegel

'09-'10

## NEW TEACHER SUPPORT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



Russell "Rusty" Darley

Wilson County Career

Technical Center

Health Science

### WHY DID YOU BECOME A TEACHER?

*"I became a teacher so I could use my education and experience as an allied health professional to guide and educate students in pursuit of their healthcare career. Also, with two small children, the school schedule is very attractive."—Rusty Darley*

## TEACHER WEBSITE of THE WEEK:

[http://www.nyphilkids.org/  
main.phtml](http://www.nyphilkids.org/main.phtml)



### New York Philharmonic Kidszone

Making great use of Flash, this site offers kids an inside look at how a symphony orchestra is organized, information about instruments, the role of the conductor, and profiles of composers and musicians. In the Instrument Storage Room students can listen to short sound samples of each instrument while the Instrument Lab shows students how to make musical instruments using common household items. A very good example of how to make a complicated subject very understandable for kids.



## OFF THE BOOKSHELF



**New Teacher Book: Finding Purpose, Balance, and Hope During Your First Years in the Classroom** by Kelley Dawson

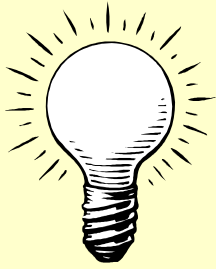
Salas (Editor),  
Rita Tenorio (Editor)

Teaching is a lifelong challenge, but the first few years in the classroom are typically among a teacher's hardest.

This collection of writings and reflections - some by new teachers, others by veterans with decades of experience to share - offers practical guidance on how to effectively navigate the school system, how to form rewarding professional relationships with colleagues, and how to connect in meaningful ways with students and families from all cultures and backgrounds.

*The New Teacher Book* will help new teachers from kindergarten through high school to sustain the passion and ideals that led them to teaching, and channel that energy into the day-to-day reality of working in a school.

"The New Teacher Book puts to rest the false dichotomy between academic excellence and teaching for social justice. It is highly motivating for new teachers and inspirational for us "old" teachers, who will be reminded of the joy, activism, and caring with which we began teaching." -- Jill Moss Greenberg



# Strategies for New Teachers . . .

## GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR WEIGHTED GRADES

- What assignments best reflect mastery of objectives?
- How much should be based on what students do in class (under your care) versus homework (where situations vary widely)?
- What assignments best reflect skill acquisition?
- Which are more a measure of personal responsibility and effort?
- Can students still pass if they never do homework?
- Can students still pass if they fail every test?

### ADVANTAGES TO WEIGHTED GRADES

- Students and parents clearly understand how grades are determined.
- Careful thought is given to the types and values of work assigned.
- Defined values ensure that each category gets appropriate weight.

(continued next week....)



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

NATIONAL PIANO MONTH

NATIONAL SKIN CARE AWARENESS MONTH

NATIONAL KEEP KIDS CREATIVE WEEK  
September 20-26

NATIONAL CLEAN HANDS WEEK  
September 20-26

INNERGIZE DAY  
September 23

FAMILY DAY  
September 28



## Back to school

Teacher: If I had seven oranges in one hand and eight oranges in the other, what would I have?

Joe: Big hands!